Minutes of the
Meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches
Uppsala, Sweden, 1-8 November 2018

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1. WCC and ACT Alliance Joint Day on Ecumenical Diakonia and Sustainable Development

On 1 November, the executive committee participated in the WCC and ACT Alliance Joint Day on Ecumenical Diakonia and Sustainable Development. This event deepened understanding of what it means to be both faith- and rights-based by taking a look at prophetic diakonia and advocacy as integral parts of the work of the WCC and ACT Alliance.

In a series of three plenary sessions with integrated group work, participants heard from churches and ACT members engaged in ecumenical diakonia in alignment with the agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The meeting opened and closed in prayer. After the meeting a dinner was hosted by the Christian Council of Sweden. The event formed a bridge between the ACT Alliance Assembly and the WCC executive committee meeting.

2. Swedish Ecumenical Weekend

The Swedish Ecumenical Weekend took place in Uppsala, Saturday, 3 November through Sunday, 4 November. The programme was prepared by the Christian Council of Sweden in collaboration with its member churches. Sunday worship took place in the Cathedral of Uppsala. The service was led by Archbishop Dr Antje Jackelén and the WCC general secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit gave the sermon.

The executive committee took some time to reflect on the weekend. The moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom (Anglican Church of Kenya), asked the committee how they had experienced the Swedish Ecumenical Weekend, and what could be interesting to bring to the executive committee's further deliberations.

H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Holy See of Etchmiadzin]) said he experienced the visit to Uppsala as meaningful in terms of local activities and local churches. He also said his heart bleeds when he goes to beautiful churches that are empty. Statistics show that the emptiest churches are in the Netherlands and in England. Today the church was full. What is the secret?

Ms Emily Evans (Uniting Church in Australia) said she had fun with the additional festive activities and that it was interesting to learn more about Swedish culture. She was thankful for the good organisation of the visit.

Rev. Dr Festus Ambe Asana (Presbyterian Church in Cameroon) was also impressed with the church visits and wished some of the buildings could be moved to Africa, because our church buildings are full or even overfilled. When he has seen church buildings in Switzerland in areas where there can be avalanches, he has heard that people get attached to the church.

H.E. Archbishop Dr Abune Aregawi (Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church) said he had observed in the church service that the gender balance is better, a very positive impression. People are very hearty and hospitable and integrate delegates from different countries.

3. Prayers and worship

Morning prayer on Friday, 2 November took place in the chapel of the Church of Sweden Church House. The prayer was led by the Archbishop of Church of Sweden, Dr Antje Jackelén.

Morning prayers on 5-8 November took place in the Mission Covenant Church in Uppsala. The prayers were prepared by the WCC worship team, using the ecumenical prayer cycle. Members of the executive committee led the prayers.

4. Opening Actions

The moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom, welcomed everyone to Uppsala. She especially welcomed representatives from the Christian Council of Sweden, Church of Sweden and the Uniting Church in Sweden, among others represented by:

Dr Anders Wejryd, Archbishop Emeritus, Church of Sweden and WCC president

Rev. Karin Wiborn, general secretary, Christian Council of Sweden,

Rev. Olle Alkholm, Uniting Church in Sweden,

Archbishop Dr Antje Jackelén, Church of Sweden

4.1 Session with the hosts

Dr Agnes Abuom introduced the general secretary of the Christin Council of Sweden, Rev. Karin Wiborn, and handed the word to her.

Rev. Karin Wiborn introduced her colleagues from the Christian Council of Sweden. She then presented a film on churches together in faith and action before introducing the ecumenical work of the Christian Council of Sweden. Christian life in Sweden is various. The Christian Council was established in 1992. One major change was that the growing number of Orthodox churches in Sweden showed an interest in ecumenical cooperation, and that the Roman Catholic diocese showed an interest in joining the ecumenical cooperation. The Church of Sweden started growing independent from the state and a number of significant changes took place in the 1990s. Four different church families are now represented: Roman Catholics, free churches, Orthodox and Lutherans. There is a large Syrian Orthodox population, besides many evangelical migrant churches, with around 500 smaller churches in the area of Stockholm alone. There are also other religions represented in Sweden. In a secular context, she expressed hope that the country is slowly changing into a community where spirituality has more space.

The head of the Church of Sweden, Archbishop Dr Antje Jackelén, introduced the Church of Sweden, the largest faith community in the country. She presented statistics of the church, with roughly 60% of the population in Sweden belonging to the Church of Sweden. She explained the history of church and state and the particular reformation history of the country; the reformation being introduced from above, when the church was used as a means of building a state. She considered that evangelical catholicity is a gift the church can bring to the table of ecumenism. Sweden is one of the most secularised countries in the world, but secularism sometimes has a spirituality about it, connected to the struggle for equal rights and individual freedom. However, this may have a flip side. A welfare society does affect the role of the church as a community. We see anonymous or speechless Christianity, the observation of great holidays, candle lighting, etc., without identification as believing. She then presented how the Church of Sweden attempts to address this. Diaconal work, work with migrants, and dialogue are areas people show interest in.

Rev. Olle Alkholm introduced the Uniting Church in Sweden, which in 2011 brought together the Mission Covenant Church, the Baptist Church and the United Methodist Church in Sweden, all of which have their roots in the revival movement. High on the agenda today is work with refugees. There is also a lot of work among young people and children. The 600 voting members of the annual conference make it one of the biggest decision-making bodies in the country. Theology and proclamation is important for the church, in combination with its work for justice and peace. We have an ecumenical calling, which is why we are called the Equmeniakyrkan.

Rev. Daniel Alm from the Pentecostal church greeted the executive committee in the name of Jesus Christ. The Pentecostals have long traditions in Sweden since the Azuza Street Revival. He mentioned that Peace Prize winner, Dr Dennis Mukwege, is a Pentecostal of whom the church is very proud. There is a good ecumenical spirit in Sweden, and today the Pentecostals are happy to be part of that, as it provides leadership in the secular environment of Sweden. Swedes are generally open to new things, but they do not like authorities, they do not like someone above them. The challenge for church leaders

is very much that of being role models. You can influence many by living a life of transparency. What can be seen in our thriving young churches is the combination of a low-key natural leadership and charismatic openness with a strong diaconal thinking, standing for justice and peace, with a servanthood mind-set.

Dr Abuom thanked the contributors for the rich and encouraging story of the history, the life and the potential of the churches in Sweden, and invited the executive committee members to briefly share questions or stories.

H.G. Archbishop Dr Abune Aregawi thanked the contributors and shared about the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, one of the most ancient churches in Africa and the world. Recently new events are taking place in the country, with the appointment of the first woman prime minister and ten more woman ministers. The other event is that Ethiopia and Eritrea reconciled and opened their territories, and people have started to exchange traditions and social activities. The church is also one of the founding members of the WCC and the AACC.

Archbishop Emeritus Dr Anders Wejryd (Church of Sweden), WCC president from Europe, added some information on the disestablishment of the state church in Sweden. When we say that we are for a secular state, as members of the churches, we somehow mix state and civil society. This is interesting in a new time when a formerly authoritarian church moves into a new age. It is good to share about this, because the churches are moving into a new position in society.

Bishop Simo Peura (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) asked the Uniting Church in Sweden how they are managing the three different church traditions. Also, in Lutheran tradition, a super intendent would have an episcopal function, how does the ecumenical church deal with that?

Rev. Dr Festus Ambe Asana added his gratitude to his brothers and sisters in Sweden. The contributions have given a new perspective on the churches in Sweden. There are two Presbyterian churches in Cameroon, founded by two different churches; coming from the roots of the reformation. In one church people have been taught to come to church to receive, the other church have been taught to give generously. He then congratulated the Equmeniakyrkan on accommodating different churches.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that many times his brothers in Africa express their gratitude for the church being close to the sufferings of the people in Africa. It is a way the churches expresses their engagement for global justice. Twenty years ago in Palestine people were already suffering. He said that the people there are grateful for the solidarity of the Swedish churches. In addition, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is an expression of solidarity. We remember what happened to Olof Palme. However, there are still Swedish soldiers in Cyprus, on the green line. But, we are grateful for the support of the churches in the WCC. He then asked about the financial assistance from the state and higher education, whether that is under the control of the state or the churches? Thank you and we will follow the example of the way you work in this country.

Rev. Olle Alkholm (Uniting Church in Sweden) explained the church's use of consensus decision making, which it started using in 2014. Not all decisions are made by consensus, but we use consensus as a method of reaching the final results. It helps us to deal with difficult questions, e.g. the question of Israel and Palestine. Consensus helps us avoid having winners and losers, we take time for prayer, and this helps us reach a good solution. We have different doctrinal traditions, but we continue our consensus process. It is hard to describe to a child what it is to ride a bicycle, but if you give a child a bicycle, he or she will finally learn to ride it.

Rev. Daniel Alm (Pentecostal Church in Sweden) explained that they have a Congregationalist background while also having strong tendencies of Episcopal leadership. Seeing the Pentecostal church family is a teenager in the church family, maybe we live with about 50% democracy in our decision-making and tend towards more informal decision-making.

Rev. Karin Wiborn (Christian Council of Sweden) said that it is important that the churches are coordinating the chaplaincy work in prisons and hospital partly in an ecumenical way. Migration is one of the core issues for church leaders when they come together, and we run different programmes. One

hot topic is the question of conversion. However, we help everyone who needs help, it does not matter what faith or nationality you have.

Archbishop Dr Antje Jackelén said that so far, we have been receiving 460 million SEK from the state, money only for church buildings. These are buildings under the protection of the government because they are historical. The training of priests takes place at the university for their theological degree, but the church has an accompaniment programme. During the last years students undergo theological church education with practice. With migrants and refugees, we are clear on not making any difference between people, regardless of background, gender, etc. At the same time, we collaborate with partners as Christians, since faith is a reason for engaging in activities.

The relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the other churches is friendly. Although the Roman Catholic Church is small in Sweden, it is global, and because of many migrants, it can have masses in more than 100 churches every Sunday. The view on ecumenism is a rather pragmatic one. The many nationalities make it an immediate challenge to integrate people into a society. Then we can learn a lot from our sister churches here in Sweden, also on issues as equality, gender justice, justice and peace. Another question is, how do you hand over faith to the new generation? We were especially happy to have a joint celebration between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation after almost 50 years of dialogue.

Rev. Cora Luisa Antonio Matamoros (Moravian Church in Nicaragua) said that she was happy for the way the churches receive the executive committee members. The Moravian Church in Nicaragua has good relations with Church of Sweden, and now she has a better understanding of the church. We must learn more about the work you do between Protestant and Pentecostal churches, and about the work you do with migrants.

Rev. Karin Wiborn shared two stories about unity. When a Swedish Roman Catholic bishop was consecrated as cardinal, he invited guests from the Christian Council's presidium, a strong expression of our unity. Another example is from a scout hike, when early on a Sunday morning a young boy from Uganda said he needed to go to mass in the morning. It our life, we are serving one church, but also contribute to another church.

Dr Abuom thanked all participants for an enriching exchange between the executive committee and the churches in Sweden. She also pointed out the fact that the landscape changes in a short time, our communities are becoming multicultural. But, we do not do this by our own strength, but by the power of He who has called us. She then called upon Mr Peter Prove to read a joint letter from the Christian Council of Sweden and the executive committee.

The letter was adopted by consensus.

The moderator then asked H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian to close the session by prayer.

4.2 Roll Call

The moderator then asked the general secretary to read the roll call. The general secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, expressed thanks for the invitation to Sweden, and welcomed the members of the executive committee before reading the roll call (See full list in Appendix 17.1)

A quorum was established.

4.3 Approval of agenda

Rev. Robina Winbush (Presbyterian Church [USA]) asked about the plan of the agenda, which seemed to be a little tight. The general secretary explained that some committees would need more time, both to draft their report, but also for the review of the report. The schedule aims at providing time for it.

He added that through the communications team regular updates on the programme is shared. Secondly, there are minutes of the meeting. Thirdly, after central committee meetings, a letter of update is sent to member churches; after executive committee meetings a letter of information is shared with the central committee members.

Ms Winbush said that some members of the executive committee had been invited to take part in the programme of the Swedish Ecumenical Weekend, and asked whether it would be necessary to decline this invitation. Dr Tveit answered that since executive committee members in general had not been particularly invited to the afternoon sessions, so it had been decided to continue with business.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

The moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom, then gave the word to H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate) who shared news of the passing away of Metropolitan Dr Bishoy of Damietta. He was a great spiritual leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church, strongly committed to the dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Churches. He was the spiritual father of many, always receiving spiritual sons and daughters who came to speak with him. Metropolitan Bishoy recently took part in a meeting with the United Bible Societies in Armenia where he actively contributed to the agreement, the fruit of twenty years of work, despite suffering of illness. Having worked together for forty years, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios had been able to thank him for his contributions before he passed away.

A minute of silence was kept in remembrance.

4.4 Approval of minutes

Ms Emily Evans gave a word of appreciation of the detailed minutes.

Mrs Anne Glynn-Mackoul (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East) referred to the top of page 4, where it was referred to the a meeting convened by the patriarch in past tense, however, the meeting had not yet taken place. In addition, the project in the USA refers to the churches in the USA.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim pointed out some corrections:

- In p. 2, referring to the meeting in Amman, it was specifically mentioned to have a majority of members from the executive committee, in order not to be less than the number of staff and consultants. However, this was not meant to give the impression that members of staff should not be there.

- End of p 2, the 100 th anniversary refers to the restoration of the Patriarchate of Moscow.

- p. 4, regarding the statement of the Israelis and Palestinians, we must express support to the international community for the two-state solution. It is always good to remind them of the position of the WCC.

- p. 11, second paragraph, refers to an issue related to the ministry of women; the reference was actually to a concrete book.

- p. 11, third paragraph, the dates are 1-6 October.

- p. 18, I refer to the suffering children of Nicaragua.

- p. 24, middle of the page, should read that secular bodies who do not respect the Holy Bible *as WCC does*, otherwise we may give the impression that WCC does not.

- p. 26, regarding the visit of the Holy Father, we need to show action, not only to say that we walk together.

- p. 27, my intention was not to request a visit with the Holy Father, but to highlight that this would be an opportunity for him to share in personal talks with members of the central committee, and a chance for our students to see him person to person.

Dr Abuom thanked for the comments and said that some language corrections would be done. Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked whether this much detail would be normal for minutes. Dr Abuom responded that there have been a variety of approaches to keeping minutes. The main point must be to capture the discussion and the most important decisions. H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said it is important that the members feel they can speak freely. H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos (Malankara

Orthodox Syrian Church) suggested keeping the minutes brief and summarized, so that the minutes are clear. The moderator reaffirmed that the minutes should generally reflect the substance of our discussions, and be the record of the business of the sessions. The general secretary warned against needing two sets of minutes or reports, as a lot of resources is already spent on keeping records.

Rev. Robina Winbush pointed out that there is a need to get some help for understanding how consensus is reached. The richness of the consensus decision-making is in fact in the discussions and sharing. How is that captured, if minutes are kept shorter? Mrs Anne Glynn-Mackoul expressed appreciation of this, and suggested that a more detailed record be kept for theological dialogue, but not necessarily in other business, where the most important is that the decision itself is recorded.

Dr Abuom said that would capture the main content of the discussion, and the decisions, but not the detailed proceedings. If we have a long drawn out discussion, we will capture the essence of that, without recording all the details. We probably need to think through the question on consensus. In a consensus mode, how do we capture those aspects of our deliberations that are not necessarily reflected in decisions?

The general secretary confirmed that more reflections about this should be done. It is more important to have the content of the important deliberations, than to have details about all proceedings.

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted by consensus.

4.5 Reflections from the Joint Day

Dr Agnes Abuom thanked Rev. Karin van den Broeke (Protestant Church in the Netherlands), who had chaired most of the Joint Day. She also thanked the other members of the executive committee who had taken part in different programme elements.

Ms Emily Evans said that a lot of good feedback had been shared by using the small screens.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim highlighted the importance of the meeting as the first time we were together, and that the participating churches, using their own local structure took actively part in the meeting. When speaking about giving the opportunity to the youth, there was only one young person in the resolutions group. It is the responsibility of the member churches to nominate youth. However, at this meeting, people took into account the importance of youth presence. However, it is also a question of resources in different parts of the world.

Bishop Rex R. B. Reyes Jr (Episcopal Church in the Philippines) had been invited to speak in one of the panel conversations. Following that, he felt that if there had been more time, it would have been productive to produce a common testimony, maybe a brief statement by both bodies. What could the joint witness of the two bodies at a special occasion like this be?

Rev. Dr Festus Ambe Asana felt the Joint Day had highlighted more of the celebration of the 70th anniversary celebrations, also revealing some of the fruits of the WCC during these years. The very existence of ACT Alliance is one of the testimonies of the WCC. Those who planned it thought through it well.

H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian agreed that the ACT Alliance is the product of WCC, but that he still does not fully understand the relationship between the two bodies. What is the memorandum of understanding between the ACT Alliance and the WCC?

Rev. Karen van den Broeke stated that from her perspective, the technical innovations used in conducting the meeting was a bit risky. It was done in order to collect the inputs from the conversations, which really will be collected. However, there is still a feeling that there was no real place for conversation. Still, the most important thing is that this was a historic day that, when the two bodies came together. WCC and ACT Alliance have different roles, but still belong together.

H.E. Metropolitan Mar Nicholovos said he had enjoyed the day. The intention of the undertaking was still not clear to him.

Ms Evans, based on the feedback, would be interested to know about the evaluation of the Joint Day. She asked whether there would be a structured evaluation to use alongside the feedback from the electronic tablets.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul thanked the moderator for framing some of the serious concerns we have. With limited possibilities for our inputs to make an impact, some of the concerns were reflected in the scrolled questions. But, there is little possibility that those inputs could affect the assembly itself every fourth year. The question remains, what rests with the churches and what rests with the Alliance?

Bishop Simo Peura (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland) had the impression that the ACT Alliance is living a life on its own, also on a local level. This is especially visible when we see members of the ACT Alliance doing work the churches are already doing.

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber (Evangelical Church in Germany) reported that many persons had asked her why we should sit down in small groups without having persons from the WCC with us. She had a good small group, but there was not really an encounter for many of us, maybe it was more symbolic than a real chance for dialogue. What could be the next step in order to identify together what the real issues are?

The general secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, said that he would also address this question in his report. However, the meeting was historical in the sense that it was the first meeting between two governing bodies of the two different organisations. It should be appreciated that the ACT Alliance has come further in this regard. Perhaps a next step could be to plan for a joint board meeting between the ACT Alliance and the executive committee, to discuss how we understand our different roles and what we have in common. Then many of the issues we raise could be systematised. The idea a few years ago was to use this joint day to manifest our relationship and our common roots, which was done. However, it is complicated because we are two very different bodies. We need to continue this conversation and explore the cooperation.

Bishop Dr Mary-Ann Swenson (United Methodist Church) expressed support for having a conversation between the executive committee and the governing board of the ACT Alliance. That would be the place to bring up the issues mentioned.

The moderator noted three things. In a meeting of about 60 people from national councils and the churches, she had asked whether anyone would be going to the ACT Alliance Assembly. They said no. However, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) is one of the strongest actors, with some of the largest member churches, and it was not at the table. The first thing we need to emphasize is the relationship with the member churches of the WCC on the ground. What are the challenges, the issues, how do we resolve them together? One is the issue of funding. The relationship between ACT Alliance and the member churches is a pending issue still, particularly from our part of the continent. Perhaps we need to look at the memorandum of understanding again, in order to harmonise certain areas. There could be contradictions and conflicts on the ground, particularly on advocacy. There are contradictory statements from the same region that raise concerns. We need to look at how we help ACT Alliance to be sensitive to the concept of proportionality and sensitivity in certain parts of our constituency.

Rev. Dr Samson O.A. Ayokunle (Nigerian Baptist Convention) said that the starting point should have been the memorandum of understanding, which would spell out the details of how the relationship is supposed to be. He had also wondered at the end of the meeting why there was no communiqué. How could these two groups meet without agreeing on points of action for the future, which would have been something to release to the rest of the world, as a sign of a working partnership between the two bodies. We should meet with the ACT Alliance and begin to draw a formal relationship, like a road map. If we have a working relationship, in which way do we allow the churches to partner with the ACT Alliance, in order to avoid secrecy. Dr Abuom explained that the Joint Day was not a decision-making day, but agreed that there is a need to do an evaluation.

It was clarified that the general secretary of the ACT Alliance is invited as an advisor to the executive committee, but had asked to be excused from this meeting.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim had the impression from the panel discussions, that members of the ACT Alliance are keen to work with local churches, and therefore see that as a condition for collaboration. However, as churches there are certain conditions for participation that are different from NGOs. There is a need for good will from both sides to be a common witness to the gospel.

Dr Abuom asked the deputy general secretary, Dr Isabel Phiri, to speak to the memorandum of understanding. Dr Phiri said the memorandum of understanding was approved in 2011, and this should probably have been shared with the committee in advance. Another document was the Malawi consultation report, which could have explained why we have had this joint day. These documents will be made available to you. The Malawi consultation also talked about the need for the ecumenical diakonia document. It would be important to share some of the documents from the ACT Alliance assembly documents, which explains some of the membership issues, which can help us understand the question of funding.

Dr Abuom thanked the ACT Alliance and the executive committee for an important day, the spirit is positive, and the relationships are being restored. However, there are still some areas that we, as a members of the governing bodies of the WCC still need to look at.

Rev. Robina Winbush, Presbyterian Church (USA) said that if consensus offered us the opportunity for enriched conversation, where and how is that captured, and does it need to be captured? In detailed minutes, you can see the trail of the decision-making. The general secretary said that what is decided based on the conversation on the assembly should be reported in the minutes, because there may be different views and memories.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said we need to evaluate and continue to discuss the relationship with ACT Alliance, and look at areas that need to be reviewed in the memorandum of understanding at the next meeting of the executive committee meeting in May.

Dr Abuom clarified that the report of the Joint Day and the Act Alliance General Assembly will be prepared by the general secretary and the deputy general secretary. It was agreed by consensus that the points raised on the Joint day will be minuted.

It was agreed by consensus to bring up an evaluation of the Joint day, and to revisit the memorandum of understanding between the ACT Alliance and the WCC at the next meeting of the executive committee.

4.6 Committee membership

The moderator presented the proposed membership of the different committees. She also clarified that Rev. Celina Falk (Church of Sweden) would replace Bishop Simo Peura whe he left the meeting.

Programme
Dr Agnes Abuom
Rev. Cora Luisa Antonio Matamoros
H.G. Bishop Dr Abune Aregawi
Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber (mod)
Rev. Karl Johnson
Rev. Martina Viktorie Kopecká
H.E. Metropolitan Serafim Kykotis
Bishop Rex R. B. Reyes, Jr. (rap)
Rev. Karin van den Broeke (rap)
Rev. Robina Winbush

Finance
H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian (mod)
Rev. Dr Samson Olasupo Adeniyi Ayokunle

Rev. Dr Hyun Ju Bae
Mrs Anne Glynn-Mackoul
Archpriest Mikhail Goundiaev
Rev. Karl Johnson
Rev. Taaroanui Maraea
Bishop Mary Ann Swenson (mod)
Adviser – Mr Gustaf Af Ugglas

Staffing, Personnel and Nominations
Rev. Dr Festus Ambe Asana
Ms Emily Evans
H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima (mod)
Rev. Dr Manhong Lin
H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos
H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste
Bishop Simo Peura (rap) / Rev. Celina Falk
Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
Bishop John F. White

Public Issues
Dr Agnes Abuom
Rev. Dr Samson Ayokunle
Rev. Taaroanui Maraea
H.G. Bishop Dr Abune Aregawi
H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste (mod)
Bishop Rex R. B. Reyes, Jr.

The proposed membership of the sub-committees was accepted by consensus.

5. Moderator's Address

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios moderated a hearing session. He invited the moderator of the central committee, Dr Agnes Abuom, to give her address.

Dr Abuom gave thanks for the opportunity, and also thanked the hosts. Remembering the 50th anniversary of the WCC Assembly in Uppsala in 1968, she referred to the context in 1968. There was a strong civil rights movement. This assembly had so many things to address, but lifted up the issue of racism. She then asked about the global trends of our day that resonate with the Uppsala Assembly. The global nature of manifestation should be a serious concern for us. Half of the world's poor are children. Violence can also be found within the church. She then moved on to thank the executive committee for taking on a heavy agenda. She reminded the floor of the upcoming transition period in WCC, and asked the committee to consider the minorities. She also reminded the committee of the assembly tasks on the deciding the theme and the dates of the assembly. She welcomed everyone to pray, work and walk together. (See full address in Appendix 17.2)

H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima thanked the moderator for recalling Uppsala 50 years ago. He said it was a period of conflict, but the Roman Catholic Church opened its doors for ecumenism after Vatican II, a unique experience that led to the Joint Working Group. It was a period of liberation from the suffering of colonialism. He then reminded the executive committee of the preparations of the assembly – day by day, more concrete preparations need to be made. Particularly it is important to finish the story of the theme. In order to begin to elaborate the assembly programme, the overall theme must be in place. He then invited the general secretary to deliver his report.

6. General Secretary's Report

The general secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, thanked the moderator for her important and challenging reflections. He then moved on to present his report. He started by thanking the staff for a lot of work in the short period of time since the last meeting, where also preparations for the anniversary and the Joint Day with the ACT Alliance took place, also explaining why the report was delayed. He also expressed thanks to the hosts in Sweden for hosting this meeting and preparing for the anniversary celebration. He reminded the executive committee about the role of Nathan Söderblom, who was also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his ecumenical efforts. He reminded the floor of the necessity to urging the churches to focus more on the challenges of *this* world, in anticipation, in hope. Without the eschatological dimension, we may end up pursuing a political agenda, but, the danger of being only focused on life after death is also a danger. The answer to this – what is the purpose – must be God's love. The unity of love also has an eschatological dimension. Therefore, we can reflect on our assembly theme in this eschatological perspective; the love of Christ compels us, or with the Germans: Christ's love moves us. We will spend time carefully discussing this. For God makes all things new. (See full report in Appendix 17.3)

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the general secretary for the report, and said that the floor would be open for discussion following the report on public issues. He then asked Mr Peter Prove, director of the commission of the churches in international affairs (CCIA), to present the list of public issues.

7. Public Issues

7.1 Presentation of Public Issues

Mr Peter Prove presented the six proposals for public issues to be dealt with by the public issues sub-committee. The following proposals had been prepared:

- Proposed Statement on People on the Move – Migrant and Refugees
- Proposed Statement on COP 24 and Just Transition to Sustainable Economy
- Ecumenical Witness and Action for Primary Health Care for All – 40th anniversary of the Alma Ata Declaration
- Proposed Statement on Reconciliation and restoration in Ethiopia and Eritrea
- Proposed Statement on Sexual and Gender Based Violence

In addition, Mr Prove added that he would like to flag another proposal, emanating from the fourth committee at the UN assembly, namely the issue of unfinished decolonisation in Polynesia, a painful history, including a 30-year programme of French nuclear testing.

H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste (Romanian Orthodox Church), moderator of the public issues sub-committee, reminded the committee of the 24 hour deadline for adding proposals to the sub-committee.

H.E. Archbishop Dr Abune Aregawi (Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church) said that there is now a different progress in the country of Ethiopia, especially regarding gender balance. Ten ministers are now women, which is 50% of the government. This is good news for all of us, especially for our sisters. Concerning reconciliation, Ethiopia and Eritrea already reconciled and the territories are open and trade is active. The two synods of the Orthodox church have started common meetings. The former patriarch living in Addis is active as patriarch in the whole compound, which is a good opportunity for our church.

Rev. Karen van den Broeke (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) asked whether the 100 years commemoration of World War I would be supported by the churches, and said it would be wise to have some expression of support of this. Mr Peter Prove confirmed that the issue might be recorded.

Rev. Cora Luisa Antonio Matamoros (Moravian Church in Nicaragua) asked the moderator in which region we sense that violence has increased the most, and in which region we would like to prioritise for our efforts. She asked that a little more is said about the regions of Caribbean, Central America and South America.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim added that important work was done in Jamaica on domestic violence. In the public issues text, there is something on violence, but there is nothing on violence coming from the state. We have to emphasise more strongly the problem of poverty. It relates to many other issues, e.g. the immigration and refugee question. What is the reason for migration and refugees? Then, we have to make an appeal to our member churches on issues like the Caribbean, how can we support it? WCC could make an appeal for additional funds that could be used for the specific purpose of supporting Caribbean participation. Also, WCC can play an important role in collaboration with the Ecumenical UN Office in New York, on how to deal with the question of genocide. Every year there is the general assembly of UN, and they consider important things for the whole of humanity. We have to support this international organisation, to see the role of the Security Council.

The discussion was then opened on the moderator's address and the report of the general secretary. H.E. Metropolitan Nifon gave thanks for a good report by Dr Abuom. He then raised the issue of consensus, one of the most important achievements in WCC, at least from an Orthodox perspective. He underlined that we must not try to diminish what we have reached in the course of many years.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim also thanked the moderator for her address and suggested establishing a small team on the achievements of the sustainable development goals. Who is going to be the voice of the suffering people if the WCC is not there? We have to remember this at WCC's 70th anniversary; that we need to be the voice of those suffering.

Archpriest Mikhail Goundiaev (Russian Orthodox Church) thanked the moderator and the general secretary for their reports. He especially thanked the moderator for her words on the protection of children. He mentioned the deaths of unborn children, and said that WCC should say something on this important topic. We can have different theological understandings on the question of what point the human soul is born, but the only argument that really matters is that once conception happens, that is the moment when a human personality is given potential. Consideration of interruption of pregnancy is a topic we need to bring up. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios added that abortion is said to be 32 % in Russia. Fr Mikhail said that the society up to now has not come to terms with this problem.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the floor for the discussion and gave the word to the moderator and the general secretary.

Dr Agnes Abuom thanked the committee for the comments. She then raised an issue the executive committee should deliberate over. One issue concerns the situation of children, what is going on in many children's lives is shocking. She said that her own continent has a specific problem and the churches are concerned. The trafficking, violence and the death rate is incredible.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, the general secretary, also thanked the committee for the comments, and responded to some of the questions. He explained that the Caribbean churches have a regional ecumenical body, but the question of how to relate to the churches in a proper way, may be too early to answer. The most important task is to support the region in a way that is sustainable in the region. There is a willingness and capacity among the churches in the Caribbean, however, they need to decide on a way to have an assembly, and define if and why an assembly is needed.

The other question is about the theme of the 11th Assembly, which we will get back to.

As for poverty, it is one of the many challenging questions. We need to consider how many issues we are able to prioritise as focal points. There is no doubt that poverty is increasing in all continents, and then we should address it from different perspectives. However, we should refer the discussion to our programme discussion. About the United Nations (UN) and the issue of genocide, the office for preventing genocide is one of our best partners in the UN system. It has been suggested to raise the issue in several parts of the world, e.g. in South Sudan.

As for consensus decision making, and when there are challenges to it, it can be regarded as a gift, because it reminds us that the consensus system is working the way it is supposed to. This has to do with cheques and balances. We need to make sure that we continue to be committed to the consensus process, and the best functioning of it as a procedure. How we avoid negative dynamics between us is a matter of procedures, which need to be well prepared beforehand.

As for the children's programme, there are many dimensions of it. The question of abortion is really a question in all our countries. Related to preventing violence against children, there is a significant event in November. There is also an interfaith event in Abu Dhabi on violence against children.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios thanked the moderator and the general secretary for their responses. The address and report are going to the sub-committees for further reflection.

7.2 Report of the Public Issues sub-committee

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios moderated a decision-making session. He called on the moderator of the public issues sub-committee, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste, to present the report of the committee.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon presented the report of the committee. The committee discussed both the moderator's address and the general secretary's report. The committee also reviewed the compilation of Actions on Public Issues.

He then presented the six statements prepared prior to the meeting, now revised by the committee:

- ***Statement on People on the Move: Migrants and Refugees***
- ***Statement on COP 24 and Just Transition to Sustainable Economy***
- ***Statement on Ecumenical Witness and Action for Primary Health Care for All: 40th Anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration***
- ***Statement on Reconciliation and Restoration in Ethiopia and Eritrea***
- ***Statement on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, and the Nobel Peace Prize***
- ***Statement on the Urgent Challenge of Economic Transformation: 10 Years After the Global Financial Crisis***

In addition to these, the committee developed:

- ***A draft Minute on the Impacts of Nuclear Weapons Testing in French Polynesia (Maóhi Nui), and Decolonization – for action***
- A statement on an attack on Coptic Christians in the Minya Region of Egypt, adopted by the executive committee on 2 November 2018.
- A statement on the kidnapping of 79 schoolchildren and staff in Bamenda, Cameroon, issued in the name of the general secretary on 6 November 2018.

The committee also highlighted the following issues for the attention and follow-up of the WCC general secretary:

- Letter of support for the Nigerian church leaders' appeal for stronger action to free the Christian Nigerian schoolgirl, Leah Sharibu
- International ecumenical monitoring of the forthcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), December 2018
- Attention and follow-up of the forthcoming elections in Nigeria, February 2019
- Attention and follow-up of the prophetic witness of the churches in the Philippines as they seek to uphold truth and justice amidst a number of challenges.

The public issues sub-committee also planned to undertake an examination of the 14 public statements adopted by the 3rd General Assembly of the ACT Alliance, for which time and lack of access

to the adopted documents did not allow. The committee therefore asks that this examination be undertaken by the general secretary.

The moderator asked Mr Prove to read the statements aloud, one by one. Mr Prove proceeded to read the statements (See full texts in Appendix 17.4).

7.3 Statement on People on the Move: Migrants and Refugees and Statement on COP 24 and Just Transition to Sustainable Economy

The moderator opened the floor for comments.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim asked that the appeal be addressed to the international community, and the local governments.

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber (Evangelical Church in Germany) mentioned that there is a pilgrimage group walking to Katowice in Poland, who crossed the borders a few days ago.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios suggested that mention of the pilgrimage be worked into the text.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that we have to speak a language that people understand, and name the causes of climate change. Otherwise, the text is wonderful.

Mrs Anne Glynn-Mackoul (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East) said that if there is going to be a narrative of the pilgrimage included, a commendation in this section is also appropriate.

The moderator asked that the reference to pilgrimages also be included in the paragraph on appeals.

The statement was adopted by consensus.

7.4 Statement on Ecumenical Witness and Action for Primary Health Care for All: 40th Anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos (Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church) said that especially seeing the history of colonialization, a line about traditional health care should be included. Mr Prove said that there might be some controversies regarding this issue, but that we could add something on effective traditional medicine.

Rev. Cora Luisa Antonio Matamoros said that traditional medicine in rural communities should sometimes be recognised. These communities may have medicine, but lack food. If the churches can help provide food with the medicine, this may be helpful.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that before the military coup in Zimbabwe, we brought in a lot of medicine in collaboration with minister of health. However, due to internal conflicts, the medicine was blocked, unless we paid. The regional director of the World Health Organization, former minister of health in Uganda said that the churches could help us, since we do not have a national structure for good health care. Maybe we can add that the churches can help establish national structures for medical care. It is one of the important human rights.

The moderator of the sub-committee asked that suggestions be made in a written form.

The statement was adopted by consensus.

7.5 Statement on Reconciliation and Restoration of Relationships in Ethiopia and Eritrea

Dr Abuom said that since we celebrate with the people of both countries, could we add something on “and the movement of people”.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios suggested adding “relationships” in the title of the document to read: Statement on Reconciliation and Restoration of Relationships in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The amended statement was adopted by consensus.

7.6 Statement on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, and the Nobel Peace Prize

Ms Emily Evans (Uniting Church in Australia) said that a number of strategies came out of the recent consultation in Jamaica. Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, deputy general secretary, explained that these had not been brought up, because they will come through the programme sub-committee's report.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked that the sentence on "protections" be reformulated.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that in preparation for the 80th anniversary of the WCC, the WCC could be nominated for the prize.

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos said that females should be added along with the other groups listed.

Rev. Dr Hyun Ju Bae (Presbyterian Church in Korea) asked that the expression "non-toxic" be replaced with a positive formulation.

The amended statement was adopted by consensus.

7.7 Statement on the Urgent Challenge of Economic Transformation: 10 Years After the Global Financial Crisis

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos asked that "corruption" be added to the 3rd paragraph.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim suggested adding that the global current global structure of economy is for the people who have money. Mr Peter Prove explained that "economic precariousness" should cover this.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim suggested adding at the end of the paragraph beginning with "calls", "make an appeal to international communities to give equal opportunity for loans to countries suffering from poverty.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked what the rationale is behind "limiting the like-minded". To add, "collaborate with ecumenical and other partners (including the ones we don't normally agree with)" would be helpful.

The amended statement was adopted by consensus.

7.8 A draft Minute on the Impacts of Nuclear Weapons Testing in French Polynesia (Maóhi Nui), and Decolonization

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim asked whether WCC is in the position to mention that the threat is very close. The alternative would be to say not to have nuclear weapons, as we considered in Korea.

The general secretary explained that this statement would be one way to get attention to the problem. We have made several contributions to raise awareness, and this is a good statement.

Mr Prove suggested adding "In light of the nuclear rearmament and the increasing threat of nuclear ..."

The amended minute was adopted by consensus.

7.9 Statement on People on the Move: Migrants and Refugees

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios suggested to fill in the whole biblical text and add "criminalised, marginalised and completely excluded".

There was a discussion on the use of "the Vatican", and it was suggested to replace it with the Roman Catholic Church.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim suggested adding, "give financial support". Mr Prove agreed that the point made was valid, but that it does not fit well with the scheme of the statement.

The statement was adopted by consensus

The moderator of the public issues sub-committee, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste, then asked whether the executive committee could receive the report of the sub-committee.

The report was received by consensus.

8. Finance

8.1 Finance Overview (Doc. No 24)

Bishop Mary-Ann Swenson, United Methodist Church, moderated this hearing session. She invited the finance director, Ms Elaine Dykes to present the forecast for 2018.

8.2 Budget forecast 2018

Ms Elaine Dykes thanked the moderator, and presented the Forecast for 2018 compared to the budget. She explained that it was in the nature of a forecast that it would not prove to be completely accurate. As a view at this stage of likely financial outcome 2018, it was presented in comparison with the approved budget.

The budget 2018 was approved with an overall drawdown of funds of CHF 3.1 million, including CHF 2.3 million of programme fund balances. Compared to budget:

- There was a forecast income decrease by CHF 0.6 million (2%) to CHF 25.2 million
- There was a forecast expenditure increase by CHF 1 million to CHF 29.8 million; includes CHF 1.7 million of exceptional depreciation, unbudgeted, implying a net reduction of CHF 0.7 million expenditure compared to budget
- WCC is forecasting a "balanced" result on programmes, meaning that programmes would draw on available programme funds balances and 2018 contributions income, without calling on general reserves
- General reserves are forecasted to close at CHF 7 million, after transfer of CHF 270,000 for the Papal visit
- The total drawdown of funds forecast for 2018 is CHF 4.6 million.

She explained that there was a small decrease in the overall income compared to budget. The investment results were a challenging factor in the forecast, with a current unsteady market. The income decrease forecast was connected to Bossey, the endowment funds, the residential buildings. With total income forecast at CHF 25.2 million, a relatively small decrease was forecast, compared to budget CHF 25.8 million.

As for expenditure, an exceptional depreciation of CHF 1.7 million was included in the forecast, related to the plans to demolish the wings of the Ecumenical Centre in the coming years. Still, the overall outcome forecast is a result net reduction in funds and reserves just CHF 0.7 million lower than that budgeted.

Expenditure was reduced in some programmes compared to budget, and there had been some delayed recruitment for vacant staff positions. After the World Mission Conference, and in order to report a balanced outcome for the year, the planned Mission and Evangelism activities for 2018 were reduced.

CHF 000	Dec-17	Budget 2018	Forecast 2018	Dec-18
Unrestricted				
General reserves	7,099			6,508
Bossey guest house and conf centre		(48)	(200)	
Unrestricted fund		7	(121)	
Papal visit			(270)	
Designated				
Designated programme fund	283	0	0	283
Designated fund fixed assets	10,438	(52)	(209)	10,229
Building project fund	1,345	(608)	(405)	940
Deficit fund to be covered by bldg project	(23,725)			(23,725)
Restricted funds				
Programme funds	3,066	(2,283)	(1,586)	1,480
Assembly fund	1,205	(150)	(12)	1,193
Restricted fund fixed assets	1,592		(1,592)	-
Endowment fund	9,443	66	(194)	9,249
Total Funds and Reserves	**10,746**	**(3,068)**	**(4,589)**	**6,157**

There is a risk of deficit at Bossey estimated at CHF 200 000 related to reduced room occupancy, including internal sales. Change of management for the hotel and conference centre gives hope. Looking at the balance sheet, we still see a good level of liquidity. Being confident about the view for 2018, we have started planning for next year. Ms. Dykes then passed the word to Mr Mark Johnson to present the budget.

8.3 Budget 2019

Mr Mark Johnson presented the budget for 2019. Some growth is anticipated for 2019, principally related to fundraising for specific projects. Programme specific fundraising is becoming more and more significant in the fundraising of the council. The programme budget is relying on income, and is not calling on general reserves, which is the guiding principle that the executive committee has decided on. The finance director mentioned the Bossey conference centre, showing a disappointing result in 2018. However, the new manager will introduce some changes. In 2019, the budget foresees a return towards a balanced outcome. Infrastructure charges to programmes are budgeted to remain at a relatively low level.

General reserves also need to be managed carefully. The budget 2019 does not provide for a share of costs for central committee 2020, nor for an increase to the building project fund.

8.4 Income development

Mr Johnson then asked Mr Doug Chial to present the update on income development 2018. Mr Chial started by saying that WCC continues to remain ambitious. There is strong support from the specialised ministries. Some have also increased their support to humanitarian response.

The results of membership contributions and CWME additional fundraising can be found in Doc. 26, including a list of member churches that have not yet made their contributions. He asked the executive committee members to look at the list and follow up in case the church has not yet made their contribution. During the last days we have received notification of CHF 55 000 out of 140 000 CHF additional funds to cover the costs of the Arusha World Mission Conference.

Mr Chial highlighted certain objectives which guide the income monitoring work:

1. Strengthening the stewardship of member churches. We hope more churches will contribute in 2019 than in 2018.

2. Collaboration with specialised ministries.
3. News sources of income
4. Fundraising for Bossey
5. Assembly fund, including solidarity contributions that will allow maximum representation at the Assembly

Ms Dykes then presented the agenda of the finance committee and other matters.

The moderator, Bishop Mary-Ann Swenson, opened the floor for questions.

H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste asked whether there were any plans for covering the costs of the deficit of the building project. Ms Dykes said that it would be explained more fully during the Green village session.

Bishop John F. White asked about the possibility of asking members of the executive and central committees to contribute to the sustainability of the building project. Ms Dykes answered that after the plan has been presented later in the meeting, one would see that the project is already sustainable. However, contributions towards the renovation of the Ecumenical Centre would be a theme for consideration.

Rev. Robina Winbush said that membership in the governing bodies is not personal, as we are here as representatives of our churches, and we could probably receive much more if we approached our churches.

Bishop Swenson affirmed that many members serve on a number of boards, but that the building project is a good place for appealing for personal contributions.

H.G. Bishop Dr Abune Aregawi asked about programme contributions in 2018, and the use of the Bossey network. Mr Chial explained that this contribution is additional money based on an appeal to receive extra funding.

H. E. Metropolitan Serafim Kykotis asked that certain principles should be put in place for the programme budget, regarding increasing the general reserves from available funds.

The general secretary then informed about an attack on Christians in Egypt, and asked H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon and Mr Peter Prove to work on composing a message of mourning and solidarity. H. E. Metropolitan Serafim asked that a strong statement be made regarding the shooting in Egypt.

8.5 Green Village Development Project

Ms Elaine Dykes presented an update on the Green Village project, the financial potential, and a table presenting the risk issues and risk assessment.

She opened the presentation by reviewing the project objectives, which are to reimburse the loan of CHF 24 million which refinanced the pension fund; to ensure that WCC has an Ecumenical Centre and office space designed for the future; and that the WCC owns property which generates at least CHF 3 million to cover operating expenses.

From July to October 2018, project activities focused on commercialisation of the residential building, Montreal, and the first administrative building, Kyoto; the preparatory phases for selection of a hotel operator for Rio; civil engineering studies for the Ecumenical Centre building; and the archives removal project.

The financial overview referred to figures provided by Implenia, and which were reviewed regularly by the steering committee. The overview table showed potential proceeds for the WCC of over CHF 100 million, if plots of land for five buildings were sold, and construction projects sold at target levels indicated by Implenia. Such proceeds would cover the reimbursement of the loan, the renovation of the Ecumenical Centre at CHF 25 million, and the construction of office space for rental, at CHF 33 million, and potentially leave a balance of about CHF 18 million.

The financial outcome depends on strategy, which could include WCC's decision to own an additional building, or not to sell certain plots of land, but to lease land instead. Financial tables were demonstrated showing the potential impact of land lease, or of the decision to pay for the construction of a further building, which would require additional financing. The WCC has decided to sell land and constructions in phase 1. Different strategies for phase 2 and 3 would bring different results and impacts to the financial view.

A table was reviewed presenting a risk assessment under the following risk categories: strategic risk; delay in loan reimbursement; market risks; risks of delay; construction risks; transition risks; rental and tenants; and VAT. Further work is to be conducted to assess the overall taxation risks.

In presenting the table, the following three risk areas were highlighted in particular.

The project includes three administrative buildings to be brought to market, as well as that for WCC offices. About 400,000m2 of office space is estimated to be vacant in Geneva at present. There is a market risk that low demand for office space could result in lower sales prices (for land and construction) than estimated; or that the project could be delayed through lack of demand. Alternatives will be to consider other purposes for the buildings, such as a second residential building.

A strategic and financial risk is that WCC will be called upon to take decisions for its building Lima (or Lima and Rio) when the outcome for the two buildings to be delivered in phase 3 is not known. This could lead to additional financing with related costs, with uncertainties about reimbursement dates, depending on the timing of phase 4.

A third risk of significance for WCC is management of the transition period, when wings are demolished, and alternative working spaces are required. There will be a need to offer solutions for rental to existing tenants, to ensure their continuity in working with WCC in the future. In addition, there is a requirement to plan for loss of rental income over the years in which wings are demolished.

Ms Dykes concluded the presentation by summarising the risks in the first phase. During this phase, commencing with transactions in 2019, in which land will be sold, and construction undertaken at the cost of inventors, the risks for WCC are those of a seller. The risks for WCC are principally related to market risk and pricing; and to managing the extended period of loan interest on the pension fund loan, should the contract be delayed.

At a later session, the general secretary was asked to share the report of the steering committee (Doc. No. 33) for the real estate project. The general secretary read the report. The report was received.

8.6 Report of the finance sub-committee (FIN 06)

Bishop Swenson moderated this decision-making session.

The moderator of the finance sub-committee, H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian, was invited to present the report, which would be read, discussed and edited, section by section.

8.6.1 Current financial situation

The sub-committee reviewed the forecast 2018 with total income of CHF 25.2 million, total expenditure of CHF 29.8 million and a total decrease in funds of CHF 4.6 million (budget 2018: decrease in funds CHF 3.1 million). The increase in the drawdown in funds of CHF 1.5 million principally concerns exceptional depreciation of CHF 1.7 million, required annually from 2018-2020, in order to recognise the reduced “useful life”, in accounting terms, of the existing wings of the Ecumenical Centre.

The sub-committee expressed concern at the overall reduction in funds and reserves, forecast to decrease from CHF 10.7 million to CHF 6.1 million. It was acknowledged that 2018 was an exceptional year, in which the Arusha conference on world mission and evangelism applied a fund accumulated over several years for the purpose; and which also encompassed the central committee, the 70th anniversary celebrations and the Papal visit. The sub-committee noted that in 2019, funds and reserves were budgeted to increase.

It was forecast that the programme funds would be “balanced” on closing 2018, meaning that activities would draw only on available income and programme fund balances, with no deficit to be charged to

general reserves. Various measures had been taken in the forecasting process, including adjustment or postponement of activity plans, in particular in Mission and Evangelism, with the objective of reaching a balanced outcome for the Arusha conference on world mission and evangelism.

The general reserves are forecast to close slightly above the target level of CHF 7 million after transferring CHF 270,000 to cover the costs of the Papal visit in June 2018.

The WCC financial strategy 2018-2021 indicates in appendix 3 that a transfer of CHF 250,000 might be made from general reserves to the assembly fund in 2018. The level of general reserves forecast at 31 December 2018 would not permit such a transfer, without causing general reserves to fall below the target level.

Further, the sub-committee observed that the further delay of one year predicted for the sale of the Kyoto building, scheduled originally for 2019, will result in a requirement to increase the designated fund for the building project in order to cover interest for a further year.

The leadership of the finance sub-committee currently consists of two members, as opposed to the three required. The members are the moderator of the finance sub-committee, H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian and, as appointed by executive committee, Rev. Dr Paul Gardner. Archpriest Mikhail Goundiaev, was appointed as a member of the leadership of the finance sub-committee at the meeting of executive committee, Amman, November 2017, for the period up to the next meeting of executive committee, in June 2018

The finance sub-committee **recommends** that executive committee

a. ***appoint*** *Archpriest Mikhail Goundiaev as a member of the leadership of the finance sub-committee;*

b. ***appoint*** *Bishop Dr Mary Ann Swenson as proxy for Rev. Dr Paul Gardner in his capacity as member of the leadership of the finance sub-committee, until the next meeting of the executive committee;*

c. ***delegate*** *to the leadership of the finance sub-committee the authority to approve and authorise for issue the financial statements 2018; and*

d. ***require*** *that, should the general reserves close above CHF 7 million in 2018 after the transfer to cover the costs of the Papal visit, any margin be transferred to the designated fund for the building project.*

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

8.6.2 Income development

In June 2018 the central committee approved an income development strategy as an integral part of the WCC Financial Strategy 2018-2021 (Doc. FIN 07). The goal of the income development strategy is to maintain, and where possible, increase funding. The strategy has five objectives:

1. Strengthen the stewardship of member churches
2. Strengthen collaboration with specialised ministries
3. Develop new sources of income
4. Strengthen fundraising for Bossey
5. Raise funds for the assembly

The finance sub-committee reviewed progress with the objectives, as per the milestones for 2018 (Doc. No. 26) and was satisfied with the preliminary results for the year.

The finance sub-committee also reviewed plans for securing CHF 18.3 million in membership and programme contributions for 2019, including the development and maintenance of new sources of funding. New funding is currently being pursued to strengthen existing activities that promote the freedom of religion or belief; to support peace building in priority countries; to strengthen the ecumenical response to HIV; and to support WCC work on statelessness and disabilities.

The finance sub-committee discussed a suggestion from the executive committee plenary discussion that central committee members be encouraged to make a personal financial contribution to the WCC. Though the income development strategy does not include fundraising from individuals, the launch of the WCC website, with enhanced online donation capacity, and the potential for the renovation of the Ecumenical Centre to attract donors may be opportunities to promote this method in 2019 and 2020.

8.6.3 Budget 2019

The sub-committee reviewed the draft budget 2019 (appendix 2 to Doc. No. 25), with total income of CHF 29.6 million, costs of CHF 28.1 million, and a total net increase in funds and reserves of CHF 1.5 million.

Total income includes an estimate for the first *Green Village* sales transaction, related to the Montreal apartment building, at CHF 4.1 million. The total estimated value expected to be generated from the building from 2019-2021 is almost CHF 12 million.

All programme budgets are balanced or draw only on available restricted programme fund balances.

In 2019, the programme fund balances are budgeted to open at CHF 1.5 million, being a record low. As a result, there will be little possibility for manoeuvre in financial management of projects, with any adjustment in contributions income resulting in a requirement for a matching adjustment to expenditure plans.

The sub-committee noted that the budget included an allocation of CHF 70,000 to the fund for priority areas held under the responsibility of the general secretary.

An overall deficit of CHF 35,000 is budgeted for the Bossey conference centre in 2019, close to the target included in the financial strategy 2018-2021 of generating a positive cash flow after covering capital The sub-committee noted that at page 10 of the Report of the General Secretary (Doc. No. 01), concerning the work of WCC and of ACT Alliance, the general secretary observed that: “We should avoid unnecessary overlap in our work, and also find the best way to use our total resources.” The sub-committee encourages the ongoing work in this direction.

The finance sub-committee noted that there was no provision in budget 2019 for 50% of central committee costs, as should be the case in the year between meetings, in order to spread the cost over two years. The proposed solution, as in 2017, would be to call upon general reserves.

The finance sub-committee **recommends** that executive committee:

a. ***approve*** *the budget 2019 as presented in Doc. No. 25 appendix 2;*

b. ***require*** *that financial monitoring procedures that manage programmes to this budget be reported to the next meeting;*

c. ***require*** *that a report be presented to executive committee at its next meeting setting out the expenditures incurred from the “fund for priority areas”; and*

d. ***require*** *that consideration be given at the next meeting to the transfers required in 2019 to central committee fund, the building project fund and the assembly fund; and to consideration of the relative priorities.*

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said we should keep in mind the possibility of using some money to buy land in another country, as an investment.

It was clarified that financial monitoring procedures that manage programmes to this budget, is not the same as joint reporting from the finance and programme sub-committees, just regular tracking of expenditures.

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

8.6.4 Capital expenditure

It was reported that capital expenditure in 2018 is forecast at CHF 460,000, CHF 159,000 lower than budget. The reduction principally concerns postponement of a project to reorganise work spaces in

the Lac and Jura wings. Capital expenditure of CHF 436,000 is included in the draft budget 2019, being below the guideline of CHF 500,000 set in the strategic financial plan 2018-2021.

The capital expenditure plan for the Château de Bossey includes fire escapes above the chapel and for Petit Bossey upper floor; and renovation for windows in the Château.

*The finance sub-committee **recommends** that executive committee **approve** the capital expenditure limit of CHF 436,000 for 2019.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

8.6.5 Joint session: programme sub-committee and finance sub-committee

The sub-committees met to receive a report on the categories of funds allocated by project, and the reasoning for the relative allocations (Doc. No. 25, appendices 3 and 4); as well as the schedule for evaluation of the ecumenical initiatives and other projects, together with the dates of the last evaluations (Doc. No. 20). Further, the financial profile for 2019 was discussed, together with the budget risks.

(i) Report on categories of funds allocated by programme and project

The report on programme income types, and their allocation, revealed that in 2019, CHF 9 million, or about 50% of total programme contributions, could be considered as "institutional", where WCC may determine the allocation, or the allocation may be determined in discussion with the funding partners concerned. A further CHF 9 million in programme contributions are restricted to specific projects, including the ecumenical initiatives.

The programme sub-committee expressed appreciation for the considerable degree of trust that funding partners accorded to the WCC, which ensured that contributions could be applied according to programme priorities.

(ii) Budget risks 2019

In presenting the financial profile for 2019, three budget risks were emphasised.

- Programme fund balances would be low in value in 2019, and careful monitoring would be required;
- It was assumed that general reserves would cover a transfer of CHF 300,000 at the end of 2019, towards the cost of central committee in 2020; and
- A delay in the Green Village project, and in particular the Kyoto sales transaction, would result in an increased call on the general reserves to cover interest on the loan.

(iii) Evaluations: ecumenical initiatives and other projects

The joint sub-committee received an update on the evaluation of three ecumenical initiatives and the proposed schedule to complete the evaluation of another three initiatives in 2019 and 2020 (Doc. No. 20). The joint sub-committee noted that only one other project was scheduled for evaluation, and that there had been no evaluations of other projects in recent years, other than the ecumenical initiatives.

The joint sub-committees expressed the desire to strengthen monitoring and evaluation; and to move forward with an evaluation of more projects as requested in November 2017. It noted the importance of self-assessment and advised that not all evaluations needed to be conducted by external consultants. It suggested that the guidelines for evaluation documented in November 2017 be sharpened, including the type of evaluation warranted by particular projects, or not.

The finance sub-committee concurs with the recommendation of the programme sub-committee that further work be undertaken to define guidelines for self-assessment and internal evaluations of projects, and that a plan and schedule for such evaluations be presented to executive committee in May 2019.

It was clarified that it is practical to have two different reports from the programme and finance sub-committees, as they are read in two different contexts.

The information was received by consensus.

8.6.6 Report of the pension fund committee

The finance sub-committee noted that the collective retirement fund, *Profond*, has increased its assets from CHF 4.5 billion in 2012, when the assets and obligations of the WCC retirement fund were transferred, to CHF 7.8 billion at present. The fund is in good standing, with an estimated coverage of 111% at 30 September 2018. A WCC pension fund reserve was created at *Profond* in 2012 (for the background information see Doc 27).

It was noted that WCC will call upon CHF 180,000 of the pension fund reserve of CHF 1.3 million in 2019, to be distributed to members, compensating a 2% reduction in the annual employer's contribution of 12% to retirement savings. A call on the pension fund reserve was also made in 2018, at the level of CHF 90,000, compensating a 1% reduction in the employer's annual contribution. The application of the pension fund reserve in the current year, and for budget 2019, were in each case implemented as a budgetary measure.

The *Mandate and rules of the WCC Pension Fund Committee*, approved by executive committee in July 2014 state that "In consultation with the WCC general secretary, the pension fund committee decides upon the policy for application of reserves and/or provisions with reference to the membership contract, and with regard to the requirements of relevant laws and regulations; the committee ensures the policy is applied as defined." The policy has not yet been submitted to the general secretary for consultation.

*The finance sub-committee **recommends** that executive committee **require** that a report on the status of the policy be presented in the next annual report of the pension fund committee to the general secretary.*

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

8.6.7 Green Village: review of risk assessment and transaction process

The finance sub-committee discussed the Green Village overview and risk assessment. It was noted that the risk assessment should be amended to include the risk to sales prices for the buildings in phases 1 and 2, where future owners would be exposed to construction works for the later phases on the estate. It was confirmed that this risk had already been discussed with Implenia, and that it would be added to the risk assessment chart.

The sub-committee heard a report on the expected steps in the transaction process for the first building, Montreal, the apartment building.

Given that 48 different sales contracts would be required, the finance sub-committee members concurred that it would not be practical or reasonable for executive committee to approve each sales transaction. The finance sub-committee noted that a process for selection of the individual purchasers was planned, with procedures to be prepared under the advice of an advisor, and through reviews of the offers conducted by a selected agent.

Concerning the financial dimension of the transaction, the finance sub-committee noted that the Green Village Overview had indicated that the total land sales value and development margin should realise proceeds of about CHF 11.5 million, noting that figures quoted could vary by 15%.

The development contract requires that before the sales process is launched, both WCC and Implenia agree upon the financial objectives in a formal manner, with schedules detailing the expected sales value and construction, marketing and development costs. It is anticipated that the financial objectives will be defined in February 2019. The finance sub-committee concurs with the steering committee's recommendation that executive committee's decision concerning the sales transactions for Montreal should be made by approving the financial objectives.

The steering committee will review a report from Implenia and the WCC consultant transaction advisor on the financial objectives, and will prepare a recommendation to the executive committee to proceed with the sales. The recommendation will provide relevant information on the definition of the land

plot concerned, and of the co-ownership rights and obligations acquired by purchasers in relation to the whole land plot.

If the timeline for the transaction is respected, the recommendation and the decision-making process will be conducted before the next executive committee meeting, and on an electronic basis.

The finance sub-committee **recommends** that executive committee **decide**:

(i) to conduct the decision-making for the sale of land and the Montreal building project on the basis of the steering committee's recommendation of the financial objective;
(ii) that if the decision is required before the executive committee meets in May 2019, the decision-making will be conducted by vote and by electronic means, under Rule XVIII.9[1]
(iii) as an exception to Rule XVIII.9, and given that a commercial transaction is envisaged, that the notice period between the date of notice of the vote and the date when response is due will be 30 days and not 45 days;
(iv) that, in clarification of Rule XVIII.9, that the relevant information upon which the decision could be taken, including the recommendation of the steering committee, will be provided 30 days before the date when the response is due;
(v) that the decision will be taken by a simple majority of those eligible to vote, and that the votes will be made visible to all members of executive committee.

It was suggested to add Mr Philip Modayil Mani (Church of South India) to the steering committee for the Green Village, as it would be useful with his expertise in the committee. It was noted that the nominations sub-committee had not made a recommendation. At this stage Mr Modayil Mani can be invited, but not as a member. However, naming him to the steering committee can be considered at a later time.

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

8.6.8 Assembly travel expense reimbursement policy

The sub-committee reviewed excerpts from Doc. No. 04 *Assembly preparations*, with the texts of the *10th Assembly Subsidy Policy* (September 2012) and the *Policy for reimbursement of travel costs for WCC governing, consultative and advisory bodies* (November 2014).

The sub-committee confirmed the principles set out in the *Policy for reimbursement of travel costs for WCC governing, consultative and advisory bodies*. Further the sub-committee confirmed the principles governing the priorities for granting and processing reimbursements, as set out in the *10th Assembly Subsidy Policy*, articles A. 1 (b) and (c). In addition, although it is the responsibility of a member church to submit a request for reimbursement of expenses, in the context of the assembly preparations, it is acceptable that in certain circumstances, as described in the *10th Assembly Subsidy Policy* at A.1. (a), the WCC conference office may contact a member church to propose reimbursement of travel expenses.

*The finance sub-committee **recommends** that the executive committee **confirm** the existing principles, and **require** that the 11th Assembly Policy on Reimbursement of Travel Expenses be prepared with the principles in the Policy for reimbursement of travel costs for WCC governing, consultative and advisory bodies prevailing, while drawing on the relevant articles in the 10th Assembly Subsidy Policy referenced above.*

[1] Constitution and Rules of the WCC: VIII Legal provisions
9. Decisions that can be taken by vote according to rule XIX can also be taken by postal or electronic vote provided that (1) information upon which the decision could be taken has been provided, (2) a notice period has been provided of at least forty-five days between the date of the notice of the vote and due date for the response, and (3) the thresholds for approval indicated in rule XIX are reached by votes cast as against the possible number of votes that could be cast in response to the postal request. The election of a general secretary shall not take place by postal vote. A copy of the communication shall be sent by post and electronically.

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

8.6.9 Investments

The sub-committee reviewed the report on the WCC's investments, reporting CHF 14.3 million managed under discretionary mandates by investment managers; CHF 2.6 million held and managed by the Ecumenical Trust; and CHF 0.5 million participation in Oikocredit. Results to 30 September 2018 totalled a net loss of CHF 105,000, reflecting the current market turmoil, with only the investments in the US market, held by Ecumenical Trust, reporting a gain.

8.6.10 Other matters

The finance sub-committee reviewed a report on issues raised from prior meetings. All issues had been addressed, or have been addressed in the above report.

The finance sub-committee also reviewed a report on progress with the financial strategy 2018-2021, noting that in the forthcoming process to ensure that staff evaluations are documented for in 2018 and 2019, attention should be given to identifying staff training requirements.

The report of the finance sub-committee was approved by consensus.

9. Assembly

9.1 Dates and Process for Determining the Theme

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios explained that there was not much to add since the executive and central committee meetings last June, and that plans were underway for the next assembly planning committee (APC) meeting which will take place beginning 9-13 January in Cyprus, with the following one to take place in Karlsruhe. The report of the APC meeting of last January was presented to the central committee for action and decision. This executive committee should now implement what was decided. This meeting needs to decide on exact days.

The document on WCC 11th Assembly Preparations – Assembly Dates was presented. Since this was a hearing session, it was meant to test the feeling and the issue would go to the staff and nominations sub-committee then back to the executive committee plenary. The document which was distributed during the session included two proposals, proposal 1 was slightly longer since it included four decision-making days. Proposal 2 was shorter and was based on the Busan Assembly model which included three decision making days. The general secretary clarified that in both proposals, the first Sunday was not the arrival date but would be used for set up; arrival date would be Monday. The Orthodox members pointed out that Sunday was a difficult arrival day because of church obligations. Furthermore the Feast of the Cross fell within those dates. Arrivals in both proposals would be Monday, 6 September, the executive committee meeting would take place on Tuesday, 7 September and the assembly would start on Wednesday, 8 September.

Ms Evans inquired whether reducing days would affect the pre-assemblies. The general secretary explained that there is no need to plan pre-assemblies yet, but two days would be set apart for them.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked what the purpose of holding an executive committee before the assembly would be. Was the executive committee meeting undertaking actual work, or was it just ceremonial? What was it expected to accomplish? She also asked for clarification on whether having Sunday as a day for finalising reports including the translation day would give enough time for the committee work. She asked for more clarity on how the committee and the assembly sessions work breaks down.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios explained that the executive committee meeting was a tradition of the assembly.

The general secretary explained that in Busan the executive committee had dealt with outstanding issues that needed to be fine-tuned, adding of names, etc.; all decisions that the executive committee needs to take.

The moderator added that these were decisions that needed to be taken before turning over the work to the business committee. The executive committee ends its mandate during that day, afterwards the assembly business committee (ABC) takes over. It was proposed that during that meeting the members of the ABC are invited to meet with the outgoing executive committee in order to become more familiar with the issues.

Rev. Dr Samson O. A. Ayokunle, Nigerian Baptist Convention, wondered whether one day would be enough. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios reassured him that it would be, since this meeting would only deal with outstanding issues, and that the full executive committee would have met some months before the assembly.

Bishop Swenson, the moderator of the session, pointed out that we had to be careful on how we plan so that the participants have some time off, time for spiritual life, and enough time for committees work. This will all be taking into consideration when planning.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios reiterated that the ABC would take over from the executive committee. According to the WCC rules the executive committee and the central committee mandates finishes the first day of the assembly, the ABC as a new body is established and approved, the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration will continue to function and be on stand-by during the assembly. The ABC composition is decided during the executive or central committees meeting in 2020.

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber shared with the group how important this meeting was for the German churches and that the weekend programme was a wonderful opportunity for the to share their ecumenical landscape.

The two proposals for the dates will be handed over to the staffing and nominations sub-committee to make a proposal to the executive committee.

9.2 WCC 11th Assembly Preparations

The moderator, Dr Abuom, invited H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios, to introduce the document on Assembly Preparations. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios, moderator of the APC, expressed gratitude to the general secretary for having prepared for the establishment of an assembly office, to be active from 1 January 2019. Establishing a local assembly office with a local assembly coordinator is under way. He then referred to the report's account of the preparatory visits made to Karlsruhe, with another visit planned for himself and the general secretary in February 2019, to meet with church representatives, and to discuss costs and venue matters.

An important task for the executive committee would be to finalise a proposal for the theme based on previous discussions, which are reflected in the appendix of the document. The two proposals from the executive committee will be shared with the central committee for a postal vote with a time limit of 45 days. Proposals for the size of the assembly, with the number of delegates being between 750 and 825 shall be determined by the executive committee. The executive committee shall also determine the number of advisors, the costs of advisors are to be covered by the churches themselves. There will be a need to assess the number of partners and other participants. As for ecumenical partners, the executive committee can mandate the general secretary to invite partners to participate in the assembly.

In addition, the final dates will be dealt with in sub-committees before a final decision of the executive committee. The dates are to be kept confidential until contracts for accommodation are assured. When the theme has been decided, and invitation letter to the churches will be prepared and sent in the beginning of 2019. The second APC meeting will take place 9-16 January 2019 in Cyprus. We will then try to have a third meeting together with the assembly worship planning committee (AWPC), to coordinate the work, and to know what is happening locally. Since Europe is the hosting region, a representative from the Conference of European Churches (CEC) should be on the APC, and we can ask the general secretary to invite a CEC representative to the January meeting. He further clarified that the AWPC does not have a vice-moderator at the moment, as Rev. Sabine Udodesku has been

proposed as the secretary of the AWPC. This is a chance to look at the Oriental Orthodox representation.

Dr Abuom thanked H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios for the presentation and invited Bishop Bosse-Huber to add some information.

She said that in Germany, and especially in the church in Baden and among their partners, there was joy at the decision of the central committee. Although 2021 will be an especially busy year with two major ecumenical events, the ecumenical Kirchentag will take place in Frankfurt, and then the WCC assembly will be in Karlsruhe, both in the centre of Germany. The impact of this at the beginning and end of summer 2021 can be very strong in German media.

The previous week, a meeting took place in Geneva, with the leadership of the EKD, the WCC finance director and adviser, and assembly office staff, which was a necessary first step. We agreed that there would be one office located in Karlsruhe, organised by EKD and the church in Baden together, as a single office collaborating with Geneva. However, the main theme of the assembly and the venue represent questions to the Germans. The biblical quotation proposed uses the word "compels" which gives negative connotations locally, connected to historical abuse of the word, such as: "If you do not go to church, you will be killed. If you break Lent, you will be killed." The term "moves us" might be better, perhaps we need to reflect more on this, because is it *us* who will be moved, or is it *the world*? Also, for the Germans, "Christ's love" is clear, but "the love of Christ" is not. How do we choose a theme that is inclusive, not only for Christians, but for society at large? One last remark about the word *love*; in Germany it is a difficult word when connected to church since two months ago the Roman Catholic Church published a document revealing 3,700 new cases of child abuse. We have to be careful with the word love in this context, to avoid any link to the power of abuse.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios agreed with the bishop that we must be careful with our wording. Also, the pope spoke about love, the conception of love is something difficult. Biblical use of the word love can be interpreted as friendship, *filia*, but also sympathy, *eros*. There are many meanings, depending on the context.

Dr Abuom reminded the committee that unfortunately, the central committee did not have time to consider this, even if some constituencies had difficulties with the word love. She suggested that the executive committee give it some thought, and that H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios help the executive committee reach an agreement. She then opened the floor for discussion.

Ms Evans asked that the report be sent back to the nominations sub-committee, to give it time for discernment. Then the whole executive committee can discuss two themes after the sub-committee's work to avoid a voting process. How do we ensure a spirit of consensus and discernment in that process? The central committee has approved the process, but the theme is a significant question, and we need a clear and articulate process on how we reach the decision. Also, the allocation of seats to the member churches needs to be clear.

Rev. Robina Winbush (Presbyterian Church [USA]) gave thanks for the report. She said that she had missed the conversation in June, and wondered if the proposed themes have returned to looking inwards. Where is the balance between the unity that we seek and our witness in the world? Is it possible to have a theme that would include both of the theme proposals?

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim explained that the intention of the theme is love. God is love, the ones who stay with God, stay with love. However, at the central committee, we also talked about the gift of hospitality. H.A.H. Patriarch Bartholomew in his speech two years ago used most of his speech on theology of creation, in order to come to the conclusion that we are offered hospitality by God. We have to consider how we can include this without departing from the theme. It is also reflected in the general secretary's reflections. How do we plan to use the theme for social justice? We need to reach out with a special expression of hospitality.

The moderator invited the general secretary to explain the process of selecting the assembly theme.

The general secretary said that the theme should be decided by the central committee by consensus, as it is not mentioned under decision that shall be made by voting. But there is a way to move consensus by procedure. One can ask consensus procedures to be continued, but in this case, it will have to lead to a postal vote. The most responsible way to reach an agreement is to try to listen to one another and find out what was the mind of the central committee. Then, to find two, or eventually also one theme, that would be closest to a consensus decision. The central committee would then have to say yes or no. Another issue is how we ensure a quorum among those who have a right to vote. It requires that central committee members receive it and act on it. It cannot at this stage be announced as an open forum discussion, so it needs to be clear proposals and voting, because we cannot make decisions by consensus online. As for the theme, this does not need to be a biblical quote, even if we build the theme on 2 Cor. 5. The quote needs to be developed so that it expresses our Christian commitment to the world.

Dr Abuom then asked how the committee suggested moving forward with the decision-making during the current meeting.

Bishop Bosse-Huber reminded the group about the big discussion on love, an open discussion also in the programme committee. The next step should be to build something good out of this discussion. Rev. Dr Hyun Ju Bae supported the proposal, not least because one should consider the impression the term love would have among German people. But, is it Christ's love that creates the same impression in the German public? Bishop Bosse-Huber explained that the love of Christ is not clear in German; it could be the Christ's love or our love for Christ. "Christi liebe" is a little old fashioned in German, but, "Liebe Christi" can have a double meaning. This does not exclude one or the other but the executive committee should understand there is such a double understanding in German.

Bishop Swenson said that when working on the theme in preparation of lectures, the question has also been what will become the main theme of a plenary session at an assembly. For us, it is quite easy to say the "love of Christ" or "Christ's love". But, it is "Christ's love" that moves us to be servants. Somehow, we cannot move away from love. Even if the term love has been abused, we cannot run away from the word love.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke asked how we take the theme further, being part of the pilgrimage of justice and peace. Will the pilgrimage continue beyond the assembly? Will the assembly "land" this pilgrimage theme?

Rev. Dr Samson O. A. Ayokunle (Nigerian Baptist Convention) said that the term love creates some headache. However, love is central. Without love, we are nothing. If we cannot bring it up together, we have a problem. This assembly gives us the opportunity to explore the life of love. If the world misunderstands it, we cannot run away from it, we need to put the use of the word love straight. We should not run away from it, instead of giving it the right biblical interpretation.

Rev. Dr Karl Johnson (Jamaica Baptist Union) said that love is the critical foundation of the church. The issue is communication. If we speak and no one is hearing, we are speaking to ourselves. I am hearing that this word linked with the church in Germany is understood in a problematic way. Then I am not sure we can use it. Do we go to Germany to speak with ourselves only, or are we going there to be a witness to the world. We could have a wonderful assembly with ourselves, but is that what we want?

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon of Targoviste said that the question is difficult, because the theme is central for our assembly. It can set the tone for everything we are doing, reflecting, thinking and feeling. Since there was not enough time at the central committee, we should bear this in mind, and not discard the discussion that took place in the central committee meeting. Otherwise, the executive committee will be charged with too much of a task. Secondly, people can understand or misunderstand the meaning of the word love. But, on the other hand, it is central to Christian doctrine and ethics. God is love. We must formulate it in such a way that it dissipates any misunderstanding of the term. But, we should not start from scratch. The alternative would be to give up the word love.

Dr Abuom said that she had not heard a contestation of the word love, but rather the question of how we formulate it.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim suggested to take into account why the biblical verse came to us. Continuing to read the text, he came to the second chapter, verses 11-21, which is about the ministry of reconciliation. The first part is about love, the second part is about how Christ died for all. Love is related to the unique sacrifice for all of us, for humanity. The word love is related to the death of Christ. It is not by accident we have chosen this quote, it is central in the New Testament.

H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian (Armenian Apostolic Church [Holy See of Etchmiadzin]), said that love is a beautiful word. Young people say it to each other "I love you". But, has it become something we say, that we really do not mean? A message can contain the expression "millions of tons of love". But, are we speaking about a love that cannot die? We have something that is always with us, it is the love of God.

Ms Evans said that it is also a question of process, and recommended that the committees use the voice of everyone, so if each committee goes through this discussion, then it can be brought back in plenary, recording the different ideas, so that we are hearing the voice of everyone. Then we can come to discernment and consensus more efficiently. We should identify some key questions to respond to.

Dr Abuom suggested that the committee form smaller groups of 2-3, to have a discussion, and then move into the sub-committees, to bring feedback into the plenary for clarification.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that Ms Evans has experience on the issue of finding consensus. As we find ourselves in a situation we have not anticipated, she supported the proposal.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios suggested not to divide into smaller groups, but to go into sub-committees. The committees could meet only to discuss the theme for 30 minutes, and then come back in plenary, before the sub-committees continue with their agendas. He then asked Bishop Bosse-Huber to make a proposal for a theme formulation, which is a custom also for previous assemblies, to ask the hosts for input on the theme. Bishop Bosse-Huber said that she would not bring one proposal, the term love is good. However, the formulation needs to be clear.

The executive committee then went into sub-committees to discuss the theme.

9.3 Reports from sub-committees on the theme

Group 1: The staffing and nominations sub-committee report

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said the group is grateful to Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber for the explanations of the reality on the ground in Germany, and the uneasiness around associations to the theme. We have to relate to 2 Corinthians 5, but we are not only dealing with "Christ's love that *compels* us" but also *reconciliation and unity*. We also think that a connection to the pilgrimage would be helpful. This can be taken further in the sub-themes of the assembly. The group has a unanimous proposal: *Christ's love moves us to reconcile and unite.*

Group 2: The programme sub-committee

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber reported on the group's reflection: *By the power of love, God transforms the world.* The group did not have a unanimous proposal, but reached consensus. It was important to move from Christ to God, because in our context, it is a more understandable and inclusive understanding, while Christ would be understood as more exclusive. God is love, love being one of the main attributes of God. We agreed about the broader perspective. This would be to avoid any misunderstanding on *who* is going to do the transformation, now the theme would clarify that.

Group 3: The finance sub-committee

The sub-committee brought back two proposals: either 1) *The eternal love of God moves us…/The eternal love of Christ moves us …* or 2) *The power of God's love moves us …*

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios opened the plenary discussion and said that when using the expression *God's power,* one should bear in mind that God himself has the power, is the power, and is the

beginning. The Father gives this power to his Son by his love. He sent his Son because of his love, not by the power of his love. The power is his essence.

Rev. Taaroanui Maraea (Maohi Protestant Church) explained that the use of the word power even in the religious world, can be associated with competition, even in church. This is why the sub-committee suggested using *the eternal love*.

Dr Ayokunle said that by using the word *eternal* one has already narrowed down the love of God. We want to discuss the love of God to humankind. The more we want to run away, the more we have problems. Jesus is the essence of our faith. We are a witness to the world. We do not want to compromise with the world. We want the world to know what the love of God is, it is not conditional, and it is sacrificial.

Rev. Dr Festus Ambe Asana (Presbyterian Church in Cameroon) said that he would go in the direction of H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios; supporting the first proposal.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim asked why one would want to combine power with love. He cited "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of God will be upon you". The power is related to the trinity. This refers to the day of Pentecost, of transfiguration. Why introduce a new terminology and stay away from what we decided in Geneva?

Archpriest Mikhail Goundiaev said he would support the use of the eternal love of Christ; it is Christ's eternal love that moves us. By the addition of *eternal,* we would cut off any misunderstanding of the word love, because it is not applicable to any of the misinterpretations.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul suggested that the result of the small group conversations be sent to the nominations sub-committee for further discussion.

The proposal was accepted by consensus.

A discussion took place on the decision-making process following the result of the executive committee. It was clarified that the executive committee does not have a mandate to bring in a new concept to the theme, but to propose one or two different formulations for the central committee to vote on by postal vote. The general secretary explained that in the mode of consensus, it would be more natural to propose one theme. Otherwise, the committee would raise a discussion by postal vote. The executive committee asked that a rationale for the executive committee's proposal be given in the letter to the central committee, including an explanation of how the executive committee have tried to respect a consensus methodology.

9.4 Report of Staffing, Personnel and Nominations Sub-Committee

9.4.1 Assembly Theme

The sub-committee affirmed the proposals and discussions carried out in the assembly planning committee and the policy reference committee of the central committee. Their work was theologically grounded the discussions in the executive committee and the sub-committee.

The committee also took note of the themes of the previous assemblies:

1948 Amsterdam: Man's disorder and God's design

1954 Evanston: Christ, the hope of the world

1961 New Delhi: Jesus Christ, the light of the world

1968 Uppsala: Behold, I make all things new

1975 Nairobi: Jesus Christ frees and unites

1983 Vancouver: Jesus Christ, the life of the world

1991 Canberra: Come, Holy Spirit, renew the whole creation

1998 Harare: Turn to God, rejoice in hope

2006 Porto Alegre: God in your grace transform the world

2013 Busan: God of life, lead us to justice and peace

Following the plenary sessions where possible themes were proposed, the sub-committee made the following proposal: *Christ's love moves us to reconcile and unite.*

The sub-committee offered the following as a rationale for this choice:

- All the elements from the other suggestions by the sub-committees are included in this proposal
- The theme is also suggested in the light of the proposals of the assembly planning committee and the policy reference committee of the central committee
- It is important n ot to repeat themes from the past
- The concept of unity should be included since this is the *raison d'être* of the WCC
- In this theme there are new words: Love, Moves and Reconcile
- Love appears for the first time in an assembly theme
- Moves is a continuation of the pilgrimage of justice and peace
- Reconcile – God has reconciled the world in Christ – Christ's love rather than God's love is used because we are the churches
- Our faith is the Christian faith o even in the context of interfaith relationships, it is important to identify ourselves with Christ.

The sub-committee also took time to thoroughly discuss the process for obtaining a decision on the assembly theme by the central committee. The sub-committee suggests that only one theme is offered to the central committee members rather than two. If two themes were proposed, a further discussion would be necessary. Since this is not possible at this time, it is better to bring only one proposal. This can be done through the postal or electronic means (WCC Rule XVIII, 8, 9).

In the letter sent to the central committee members, the following should be included:

- Process followed so far, including the discussions in the assembly planning committee and the central committee
- That there will be two reminders between the initial communication and the final deadline
- A few explanations on why and how the executive committee came to the theme proposal
- Very clearly articulation of the process of decision-making, referring to the WCC Rules, e.g. how to achieve quorum and how many votes needed for a decision.

In addition, the sub-committee suggested the following to the general secretary:

- Send mailing both by email and post as soon as possible after the executive committee, with a deadline of 45 days for response
- Create an email address specifically for this vote
- Ask the leadership of the central committee to act as scrutineers
- Inform the central committee and the assembly planning committee members of the result.

<u>Recommendation:</u>

- That only one theme proposal is sent to the central committee members for voting according to the process outlined above

- That the theme proposed is "Christ's love moves us to reconcile and unite"

The moderator, Bishop Mary-Ann Swenson, opened the floor for discussion.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said there is what we call faith theory, and then there is action. Action is the most important we can do. As for the second verb, unite, there is something missing, maybe the theme of hospitality. When we talk about restoration of justice, e.g. in the story of Zacchaeus, there is a way to express our love which moves us to reconcile. Visible unity is shown through action, as hospitality. He generally agreed with the process.

Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber said that she understood that this is a nice title in the English language, and that she had no questions about the theological understanding. However, there is no reflection around the question of interpretation. It is a complicated theme. To unite in German, can be to unite nations and people, but it is also means to "sleep with each other". There is a solution to this. We could say unity, which is "Einheit", but it is clumsy, because that would be a row of nouns. To unite is political and social, but it also has that sexual meaning.

Rev. Robina Winbush said she would go in a slightly different direction, to apply a concern raised earlier. The theme is very inward-focused and does not seem to have any demonstrated concern for the world we live in.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said he would like to ask whether there is a difference between the suggested themes and "Christ's love moves us to unity, reconciliation *and hospitality*".

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that it sounds less dynamic. The motto is good in English, but will not be very good in German.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke asked to hear more about the thoughts in the sub-committee.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that hospitality is a very sensitive word, maybe for some churches especially, as it could be associated with Eucharistic hospitality. H.E. Metropolitan Serafim replied that it could refer to the hospitality of Abraham and the icon of hospitality.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios agreed that it would be so in the Orthodox tradition, but there are other traditions. As a second theme, it was suggested, "to move to reconciliation and unity". In that proposal, one could use the term "Einheit" in German. If one uses the translation "to unite", we have the verb-aspect, which makes it more personal. However, if it creates a problem, that "Christ's love moves us to reconciliation and unity", we could consider something else.

H.E. Archbishop Dr Abune Aregawi said he would like to speak about the word reconcile. Christ reconciled the world with himself, with the Father, therefore with himself, because they are one in divinity. But, there are some technical or dogmatic challenges there regarding subordination in the relation between the Father and the Son. Therefore "incarnated" Christ can be reconciled with himself, the Father, the Spirit. That is life. This must be clear. God has reconciled himself already in Christ. Christ has reconciled himself with the world. Thus, Christ has reconciled himself with the Father and the Spirit. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that this is not understandable. Christ reconciled himself through his death and resurrection, for our sake. H.E. Archbishop Aregawi replied that Christ died for humankind, but by the will of his Father. Thus, God has reconciled the world in Christ.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios asked what the proposal would be then, because Christ also reconciled the world by his deed.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that in the prayers this morning it was clear how Christ reconciled the world, which also includes the whole of creation. In 2 Cor. 5: 14-21 there is an analysis of the meaning of reconciliation. H.E. Archbishop Aregawi agreed, but said that this is by the will of the Father and the Spirit. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios agreed but said this could be put in the theme.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke asked what was meant, that we are not the subject of reconciliation and unity. H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that what H.E. Archbishop Aregawi is saying is important. We need to make an analysis of the theme, and put those points in there, that it is Trinitarian. But the theme needs to be short.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon said that we have to focus on the theme of the assembly, and that should be short. We have been reflecting on that these days. In my view, it is the time now, after four assemblies, to be Christological. Christ is the characteristic of Christianity. And also the theme of love. I believe that we can say Christ's love moves us to reconciliation and unity.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said as a reminder that it was mentioned in the report from the committee, that this is a follow up and link to the pilgrimage. When somebody moves, this is

pilgrimage; this is the love of Christ. To respond to Bishop Bosse-Huber's remark; unity is then the result of the existence and struggle of WCC for the unity of the church.

Dr Bae spoke to the term "Christ's love" and the option for "God's love" as an alternative. Coming from Busan, Christ's love is okay with the churches there. But the Germans prefer God's love because of the contemporary context. We have used God in the previous assemblies, and we could postpone a Christological theme. It is also about respecting the wish of the hosting church. The theme lacks the sense of urgency, so some inclusion of hospitality can connect to the contemporary suffering of the world today.

Bishop Swenson said that we need to look to the daily plenaries on how we can build around the theme in the plenaries.

Rev. Cora Luisa Antonio Matamoros said she liked the theme, but being in the context of Germany, where we have a certain interpretation, I think it would be good to reconsider it. These things can be a problem in the country, and we want to avoid that and rather be understandable by using "the love of God".

Bishop Bosse-Huber, suggested to avoid saying "we", as it could be understood as "we" versus "they". If we say "we", who is that we? Where is the link to the pilgrimage of justice and peace? In Busan, we learnt to say not only "we", but also "we and the world". She has some of the same concerns.

Dr Ayokunle appealed to the understanding of identity. Our identity cannot be overwhelmed by any other identity. The church has to think that it is called to be in the world, but the world is not who we are. We must allow the mission to overwhelm us, not the world, because then we lose who we are. The church has a message to preach to the world. If we allow the world to change our message, it can no longer be allowed to preach. Christ's love is comprehensive. It is dangerous to turn away from our uniqueness. At the same time, the love of God should not be jeopardised. I want to reconsider the recommendation by the sub-committee and not allow what the world is saying to derail us.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim asked that three things be taken into account. Firstly, the power of love. Secondly, that the assembly in Nairobi already used unite. Thirdly, the biblical term uniting all the churches is diakonia. Diakonia means working together. We could say that Christ's love moves us to reconciliation and diakonia.

Rev. Robina Winbush remarked on a procedural problem. Yesterday the committee broke into three groups, but now it appears that what has been brought back is only the theme of one group, with no sense of hearing or incorporating input from anyone else. This means that the group exercise was a waste of time.

The general secretary said that firstly, if we move from reconcile to reconciliation, we have reference to 2 Corinthians through the message of reconciliation and the ministry of reconciliation. The term "moves us" is not about reconciling amongst ourselves, but reconciling us to the world. Unity is about unity of the church, but also for unity in the world. We cannot say that our only call is to unity in the world, it is also about unity to God. It leads us beyond the church. Except from that, there is no problem using the noun instead of the verb. Secondly, if we change from "compel" to "move", that connects us to the pilgrimage motive, but it brings us lower in terms of intensity. However, we realise that in Germany the translation would not work. My question is rather related to the use of "Christ's love" or "God's love". Is the problem related to the grammar? In both cases, you would get the problem by using the genitive case.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that if you translate "the love of Christ", it would be "die Liebe Christi". Dr Tveit responded that by using "Gottes liebe" you eliminate the objective. In addition, that would be eliminating a point in this interfaith time, there is a point in saying "we say Christ".

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that, having heard all this, she strongly felt that we could embrace "God's love moves us to reconciliation and unity". The love of God is powerful, it moves us, and it does not lessen our Christian identity. H.E. Archbishop Aregawi reiterated that God has reconciled the world in him, through Christ.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that there is the word love. We are the ambassadors of Christ. But, love stays with God. I think there is a solution, but in order to stay with the theme we have to keep this. It is not a problem to use “Einheit” in German. We will need a special publication on the importance of the theme.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon said he was not afraid of having a short general theme. There are always a few sub-themes, which will clarify things. I suggest, in order to ease our discussion, we consider that.

Bishop Bosse-Huber suggested to say, “Christ’s love (or God’s love) moves to reconciliation and unity”, without the word “us”.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said he disliked the comment that a group would be dominating the theme, as we did not want to exclude anybody, but did our reflections. We carefully discussed the proposals of our German friends. We gave our rationale to you. Now, it seems the problem is not Christ, it is unite. And now we need to delete “us”.

Bishop Swenson said she would be leaning towards “Christ’s love moves to reconciliation and unity”.

Rev. Robina Winbush said she continued to be concerned that there is not an outward focus. If you go back to the previous themes, you would find that sub-themes do not last, only the theme. We continue to be inwardly focused.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that we should be aware that we are in a tragic situation today, with the expansion of this word “love”. We are Christians, and we need to be clear about our identity. Of course, we pray for the others. However, we are Christian churches; we are struggling for the unity of the church, through Christ’s resurrection and love, which is reflected in the theme. A theme without sub-themes does not stand. It needs to be analysed through the sub-themes. We cannot put everything in the main theme.

Ms Evans suggested that there would be a clear way forward, asking to nominate a few people to a small group.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that one needs an object in the sentence. Is it “us” or is “the world”?

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon said he agreed with some of the criticism, but asked that people stop criticising without proposing something new. All the concepts are contained in the theme, even the other proposals from yesterday. With all good intentions, the group tried to formulate something that is satisfactory for most or all of us. Bishop Bosse-Huber said that if we remove “us”, that is acceptable. We have to respect the point of view of the hosting church. Now, the proposal is “Christ’s love moves to reconciliation to unity”, it is clear, and it moves the whole of humanity.

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos said he agreed with Mrs Glynn-Mackoul. He proposed an addition: “Christ’s love moves *the creation* to reconciliation and unity”.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios gave us a solution. We have to stick to the reference to the letter to the Corinthians. The other suggested themes are similar, and could be added as sub-themes.

Dr Ayokunle said that he agreed that the object, “us”, is important. Mrs Glynn-Mackoul suggested that also “the world” could be used. H.E. Metropolitan Dr Gennadios said that this would not work theologically. What does it mean? In my understanding, we talk about unity as the overall motto of the Council: the unity of the church.

Dr Tveit added “and humankind”.

Bishop John F. White (African Methodist Episcopal Church) suggested using “creation” as the object of the sentence. H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that we cannot use creation as an object, as it is given by God, so there would not be a theological basis for this as a theme. We are the servants of creation.

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos withdrew his proposal.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said it would be helpful if the moderator could refer this to a small group.

Bishop Swenson suggested that a small group consisting of Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber, Rev. Robina Winbush and Rev. Karin van den Broeke convene after the meeting.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios expressed disappointment over the lack of trust in the sub-committee.

Dr Abuom said that everybody had heard the concerns. We have also heard proposals and the theological challenges to some of the proposals. The small group can, having listened to this, take another look back at the report of the nominations sub-committee. The general secretary said that the normal order of procedure would be to refer this back to the sub-committee to bring back something new to the plenary. Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said it would be possible by consensus to refer this to an appropriate group. It does not need to go back to the original committee, which is how consensus work according to Rule 19.4.9.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke suggested that the new group include some from the original sub-committee; otherwise, there would be two proposals to deal with.

Rev. Robina Winbush asked that the moderators deliberate over the question. She said she appreciated the wisdom of the sub-committee in suggesting only one theme. However, if we cannot reach agreement, we can have two themes. She was deeply concerned about reaching consensus around one theme.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said she would not like to be member of a group on the background of distrust, which is not what she had wanted to express about the original sub-committee. However, maybe we need a little bit more work, but this cannot be done without the nominations committee.

Bishop Swenson said that the question would be referred to the leadership group.

Later in the meeting the executive committee came back to the assembly theme discussion and Dr Agnes Abuom moderated this decision-making session.

The moderator reminded the executive committee of the last theme tabled; “Christ’s love moves to reconciliation and unity”. The proposal was tabled but not agreed upon. A small group met to think through the proposal and bring back new ideas. The moderator then invited feedback from the group.

Rev. Celina Falk (Church of Sweden) reported that eight people had met in the small group. The group read the biblical passage several times, and worked on the wording. The group then came up with the following proposal: *God’s love moves the world to reconcile*

The group felt that this theme would also capture unity. The theme will also give the APC a possibility to elaborate on reconciling climate, and reconciling peoples.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim added that in the biblical passage there is mention of both Christ’s love and God’s love.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that the object “us” has a meaning, it makes the theme more personal. However, unity has to do with the fact that we are divided as Christians. If we cannot reconcile we do not serve the same church.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that when a body cannot reach consensus, the moderator has the authority to send it to a small group for further consideration before bringing it back in plenary.

Dr Abuom affirmed that there were now two proposals on the floor: “Christ’s love loves to reconciliation and unity” and “God’s love moves the world to reconcile”.

Rev. Celina Falk said that the group had read more than one verse, but concentrated on the passage from 2 Cor. 5. She added that the small group would be flexible on the use of “God’s love” or “Christ’s love”.

Bishop Bosse-Huber reiterated that from the perspective of the larger biblical passage both would be possible.

Bishop Rex R. B. Reyes Jr. (Episcopal Church in the Philippines) said that in Asia people would be likely to prefer “God’s love”. Rev. Karin van den Broeke agreed that this would be the preferred option in a secular context in Europe and elsewhere.

Dr Abuom said that the themes proposed are close to each other. She then asked whether the committee could agree on the term “Christ’s love”.

Dr Asana said that God has been used in a number of themes earlier, and that now it would be time to use Christ.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that the verse had been read, but also the context around it. The small group would be willing to use “Christ’s love”; after all, it is the Triune God who moves the world to reconcile. Unity follows reconciliation, and is a form of the work of reconciliation of God in the world. Therefore the theme may be stronger with only reconcile.

The general secretary said that there is no request to have a biblical quote in the title. The discussion has therefore revolved around the text in a wider sense, paraphrasing it. Only the 1968 theme was a Bible quote.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that in the APC there are 25 members from all continents. There were 20 possible themes discussed, and there was no reference to the objections that have been raised here. APC then brought proposals to the central committee, where no one reacted as is being done here. Bishop Bosse-Huber recalled that there was a hot discussion at the central committee meeting.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul recalled that there was shortage of time at the central committee meeting, so no consensus was reached. Dr Abuom said that because of the time limits, no consensus was reached. However, the challenge for the executive committee is to be faithful to what the APC has said.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that when looking at verse 18, it is clear that all is from God, God reconciles us through Christ. Verse 14 refers to the love of Christ. The objective of salvation is God’s reconciliation of us through Christ.

Dr Abuom reminded the committee of the option of sending two theme proposals to the central committee. It is also a possibility to move from consensus to voting.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that because of lack of time, there are real tensions in the discussion. If possible, she would still prefer to reach one proposal by consensus, and asked whether the group could move on “Christ’s love moves the world to reconcile”.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that in the nominations committee there had been discussions on how the theme could be communicated in a good way, to bring the spirit of the discussion to the central committee. If we end up with two themes, we would have to refer to all the arguments, which would be difficult, and most likely divide the central committee. We could choose a more personal object than “the world”; this is a call to every one of us, as Christians. “moves us” then also refers to Jesus accompanying us with his cross and resurrection.

Bishop Bosse-Huber agreed that God’s love moves “us”, as in our hearts, which is a pious understanding. But it is also an understanding of being moved to justice and peace through social action. To reconcile in German is understood very personal, even if it is “the world” that is moved. Karlsruhe was a place of terrible battles during the world wards, so “reconcile” is important also for that reason.

Rev. Robina Winbush said that she thought “us” would be too inward looking, while “the world” includes “us”. There is more to build on with “the world”, “us” feels more exclusive.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios agreed that we could use the term “the world”, neighbours are included in the terms. However, it is a pity that “unity” is removed. We have a document on “The Church” which has been sent to member churches for response. After the “Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry” document, this is one of the most important documents for the understanding of the church, and for church unity. It is important that the WCC responds to that.

Rev. Robina Winbush wondered whether “unity” applied to the world or just the church.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that the word unity does not appear in the biblical verses. Dropping it also allows us to use an action verb rather than the noun, which makes it more powerful.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim suggested, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconcile – living in unity”.

The moderator tested the floor to see that there was consensus on using “Christ’s love moves…”

Rev. Karin van den Broeke said the “… reconcile” sounds more active than “… to reconciliation and unity”. It is also more open to bring in issues of reconciliation.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that the idea was not to delete unity as part of the content, as it is the purpose of the WCC. But, how can we bring it a more active form? Speaking about unity in Germany, people would think of the struggle for shared Eucharist between Protestants and Catholics.

Dr Tveit said that the church talks about itself as a sign of unity of humankind, unity is not only an ecclesial matter. Another point is how it would be understood if we say, “Christ’s love moves the world”? Would people understand that the church is included in “the world”?

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios responded that God loved the world so that God sent his son. God sent his own son as man and God, to reconcile the people of God.

The moderator tested the house on “Christ’s love moves the world to reconcile”.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios suggested, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”. The world includes the church.

Rev. Celina Falk said that this would limit the reconciliation to only be about unity.

Rev. Cora Luisa Antonio Matamoros said that in order to reach consensus, would it be possible with “The love of God moves the world to unity”.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that after 70 years the WCC needs to reconfirm the commitment of the fellowship of churches to unity.

The moderator tested the floor, but there was no consensus.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that discussion and discernment on the theme is part of our spiritual journey and pilgrimage in other groups discussing the theme. She then asked whether the group could agree on “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”, a theme that would be the guiding theme for the next period.

The moderator repeated the theme, reminding the committee that it is wrestling with the issue, but is still working together.

Ms Evans suggested that a video with the LCC explaining the process would be a more effective tool in sharing the story, than a four-page letter to the central committee.

The general secretary said this could be looked into, following the rules outlines by the report of the nominations committee.

The moderator, Dr Agnes Abuom, said that she could not see anyone against the suggested theme, and that the executive committee reached consensus on proposing only one theme proposal

Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity

She then invited Bishop Mary-Ann Swenson to lead in prayers.

9.4.2 Dates of the assembly

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios continued the report of the staffing and nominations sub-committee:

Recommendation:

That the executive committee decide that the dates of the WCC 11th Assembly be Wednesday, 8 September – Thursday, 16 September 2021 (including four decision-making days) as detailed below:

- Sunday, 5/09/21 – Set-up for pre-assemblies

- Monday, 6/09/21 – Pre-assemblies, arrival of executive committee and assembly set up

- Tuesday, 7/09/21 – Pre-assemblies, executive committee meeting, arrival of assembly participants and assembly set up

- Wednesday, 8/09/21 – Assembly in session (hearing sessions)

- Thursday, 9/09/21 – Assembly in session (hearing sessions)

- Friday, 10/09/21 – Assembly in session (hearing sessions)

- Saturday, 11/09/21 – Weekend programme and Committees

- Sunday, 12/09/21 – Weekend programme and Committees

- Monday, 13/09/21 – Assembly in session (decision sessions)

- Tuesday, 14/09/21 – Assembly in session (decision sessions)

- Wednesday, 15/09/21 – Assembly in session (decision sessions)

- Thursday, 16/09/21 – Assembly in session (decision sessions)

- Friday, 17/09/21 – Break down

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked whether the committee discussed the financial implications of the dates.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios confirmed this. He reminded the committee not to make the dates public, in order to give time enough for negotiations on hotel bookings.

The recommendation was received by consensus.

9.4.3 Assembly Seat Allocation

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios continued by reading the recommendation on seat allocations:

Recommendations:

- That executive committee authorize that 775 delegates from the member churches be invited to the assembly

- That the executive committee confirm that member churches may also bring an advisor to their delegation at the church's own cost.

The recommendations were received by consensus.

9.4.4 Invitations to Ecumenical partners and churches that are not members of the WCC

Recommendation:

He continued by reading the recommendation on further invitations:

- The executive committee mandates the general secretary to invite ecumenical partners to the next assembly on behalf of the central committee.

It was clarified that ecumenical partners and churches who are not members participate at their own costs, which is consistent with previous practice. This should be clear in the communication. An adjusted new recommendation was made to clarify this:

- The executive committee mandates the general secretary to invite ecumenical partners to the next assembly on behalf of the central committee, at their own cost.

The amended recommendation was received by consensus.

9.4.5 Assembly Worship Planning Committee

The sub-committee was informed of the resignation of Rev. Everdith Landrau, F/O/Y (Presbyterian Church [USA]). The recommendation was read:

Recommendations:

That the executive committee name

- *Rev. Dr Elisabeth Krause-Vilmar, F/O/Y (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) to replace Rev. Everdith Landrau on the AWPC and to act as moderator of the committee*
- *Archpriest Mikhail Goundyaev, M/O (Russian Orthodox Church [Moscow Patriarchate]), as vice-moderator of the committee*

- *Rev. Sabine Udodesku, F/O (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland), as secretary to the committee*

That the executive committee approve the terms of reference and mandates for

- *Assembly Worship Planning Committee*
- *Local Worship Committee*
- *Music director*
- *Assistant music director.*

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

10. Governance and Institutional Matters

10.1 Constitution and Rules Working Group Update

Mrs Anne Glynn-Mackoul, moderator of the constitution and rules working group, which was created after the June 2018 central committee meeting, reported on the document on Constitution and Rules Working Group Update. The group is made up of four central committee members, all experts in constitutional matters and assisted by Catherine Christ-Taha, has met via conference call twice. This group addresses matters related to the WCC Constitution and Rules in order to propose amendments where necessary. The group has used the Fuze technology which has worked very well, but unfortunately, Archbishop Opoko – for logistical reasons – had not been able to take part in any of the meetings.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul then inquired whether the executive committee could name a fifth member, in which case this would have to come through the nominations sub-committee. She also circulated a document asking the executive committee members to help them reflect on issues the group should work on. Since the Busan Assembly the WCC central committee meets only every two years, the assembly is the only body that can change the constitution, but the rules and supplement can be modified or clarified in between assemblies. After some years working with the new constitution and rules and supplement, there are some points that need to be fine-tuned. She asked the committee to let them know where they have found areas that can be improved, modified, etc. She pointed out that the group would need a face-to-face meeting next year in addition to the conference calls.

The moderator thanked her for the report.

10.2 Evaluation of the central committee

The moderator asked Ms Catherine Christ-Taha to present the documents on Evaluation of the Central Committee, June 2018 and on Central Committee 2020 Preparations. Ms Christ-Taha explained that an evaluation form had been distributed to the participants and the responses and results were collated in the evaluation presented. The document on the central committee meeting scheduled for March 2020, takes into account the results of the evaluation and the areas challenged during the meeting.

The moderator went on to explain that the central committee was discussed when the leadership of the central committee had met in September. They looked at the way the committees had worked, and that the context that the meeting was overshadowed in some ways by the visit of the pope. The staff were overstretched and the agenda was not completed. The LCC looked at the way the consensus method was used and was concerned that, because of time pressure, there were flaws in the process. Another concern was the different expectation of the participants – some wanted to move and others did not. Overall we should be more effective in the way we work.

The general secretary explained that since most work takes place in the committees, both the committee leadership and members have an important responsibility to assure that the agenda, mandate and objectives are achieved. The staff are there to facilitate the work of the committees. The LCC also discussed about the collective responsibility of committees and at what stage do they make

decisions and agree as committees, including processing the voices of those that did not agree. The committee listened and noted disagreements, but because of the consensus mode it should find a way to articulate and take into consideration the minority opinion without opening discussion. This methodology needs more processing.

The size and quality of reports of the committees was another issue; how these reports were presented, and how the discussion around these took place. As the instructions had not been clear enough, there was some confusion in the reporting back to the central committee. The general secretary asked for the executive committee's advice on this last issue. Bishop Mary Ann Swenson affirmed the importance of the work of the committees. This work should be reinforced, the group should look at where it went well and where there were concerns.

The general secretary pointed out that the central committee members and participants had acknowledged the great effort of the staff, both its preparation and its work during the meeting. This meeting was a huge event considering the visit of the pope. For this event the general secretary acknowledged the great work of the staff, retired staff and volunteers. The general secretary also pointed out that moving to more places was not a good model, but was done this time because of the financially best proposal to reduce the budget. We aim at meetings where everyone lodges in one hotel, meeting in one place only and having committees meet in the hotel, to avoid transports as much time as possible.

The general secretary also noted that reducing time was not wise, it created a challenge. The next central committee agenda will be heavier and will require more time for discussion. This was pointed out in both the questionnaire and by the LCC. For 2020 we need to decide on venue and dates. In Geneva some dates are not possible, so we will come back to this. We have taken notice of comments, time and not having to move the committee.

Bishop Swenson expressed her appreciation for the work in both Bossey and the Ecumenical Centre.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked whether we did realise a saving by changing the hotel. Ms Elaine Dykes, the finance director, replied that it was less expensive, but we still went over the budget. However, when staying in Bossey these funds remain within the WCC.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke said she had liked being in Bossey and seeing the students and that she agreed that the role of committees was not quite clear, which is a more important point than logistics.

Dr Abuom, said it could be good to restate the role of the committees.

H.E. Metropolitan Zacharias Mar Nicholovos said that the committee moderators need to take charge. It is about controlling some people, and that some are reluctant to speak when others want to dominate. There is a need for a training session for moderators to give them skills on how to moderate.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that we have minimised the consensus place. Not all members of the central committee are aware of rules and the conduct of meetings. To maintain the ethos of consensus, to listen to one another, discern the spirit rather than dominate the microphones, need training. When we have new members, advisors, we need to explore this again.

Bishop Bosse-Huber remarked there are some very assertive members. It is not about the moderators alone, but about having an advisor that can advise on the rules, someone who has a different role to secure a safe and polite way of conduct. We should have two people in the committees, not only one, and be able to share experiences from the committees, weak points and stronger points.

Dr Abuom tested the floor, whether there would be interest in revisiting and refreshing how the consensus model works for advisors, members, staff and leadership. There was interest. She then asked how those in committee leadership can be helped to make sure that people are not leaving without sharing their insights, a team that is sensitive to reach out to those that are not comfortable, to listen and enable all. She asked whether a session focussing on the ethos of consensus as a way of working until the new assembly would be useful. The executive committee showed agreement.

Rev. Cora Lusia Antonio Matamoros said that a person who moderates well, makes us move, motivates, raises the spirits and wakes us up. This is especially important for those that do not speak the same language. A team is needed that can help the moderator ensure that all can participate, and not only a few as well as to listen to the expectations people have before the meeting starts.

Ms Evans said that it is important to keep track of who is speaking. Is there a business committee in the central committee? It could be useful to keep track of the general vibe of the meeting, consider equity, and give additional support when needed. ECHOS tried to do this with the mentoring programme. Also, there is a commitment to theology behind the consensus model.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon said he agreed with the comments. However, proper preparation before meetings is also important. If members read the documents properly, if the documents are received in time, all work becomes more useful and interesting. Perhaps the committee moderators could be in touch with members and ask them to read the documents.

Dr Asana agreed that continual revision of the consensus method is needed, especially for new members. When staff members are assigned to relevant tasks, they should also be oriented.

Ms Christ-Taha said that, as mentioned earlier the information in this document, preparing for 2020 is based on the evaluation result of the last meeting, including evaluation of the committees of the central committee. More accompaniment, including accompaniment to help with moderation, has been requested. The idea of a consensus consultant to assist with trainers and rapporteurs has been raised; also added is the idea that space and logistics are conducive to decision making. The central committee demography is on the older side, certain day cycles facilitate work. For example, if a meeting starts on Wednesday, then on Sunday it is time for prayer and fellowship while reports fo the committees are being translated and processed.

The general secretary said that it would be good to reflect on how we steward our resources. It is important to have good stewardship of time; we are there to speak and listen. Our meetings have two and three stages, there is the preparation stage with presentations in plenary; and then the committees do summaries and recommendations. We should respect that those in committees represent the whole of the central committee. This has to do with respect for each other's role. We could do more to prepare the committee moderators, rapporteurs and staff. In the past we have had more.

The new way of understanding our role as central committee is also about expressing fellowship, discerning God's will. The secretariat should reduce the number of pages – discussions can take place without too many papers. There should be good time for interaction between those invited to speak. Time in total is very valuable and should we use time in a different way, there should be a real exchange in the committees of the central committee. At the next central committee meeting there will be more business, but we should be careful that it is not only business.

The general secretary continued, that as for the central committee meeting in 2020, there is the concern that we have invitation only from one church in South Africa. Rev. Frank Chikane, president of SACC and moderator of CCIA, has now confirmed that many churches – at least ten – have agreed to unite in the invitation. There is a real alternative to go to Cape Town, challenges are related to finances (e.g. increased staff costs); and it is a question of the identity of the meeting.

10.3 Membership matters (Doc. No. 10)

Dr Agnes Abuom moderated this hearing session. She invited Ms Catherine Christ-Taha to introduce the document on Membership Matters. The main points were:

1) The withdrawal of the Cook Islands Christian Church to withdraw from WCC membership, for information.
2) The application for membership by the Episcopal Church of Sudan.
3) An application of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) to be recognized as a specialized ministry with which the WCC has working relationship

Dr Abuom explained that the Episcopal Church of Sudan was one church until the separation of the country into two countries. After the installation of the two primates of Sudan, and the two countries, they have become two provinces in the Anglican Communion, with Juba having the Primate of South Sudan, and Khartoum having the primate of Sudan. As the sitting primate was based in Juba, the South Sudan province was given the WCC membership. There is no theological issue behind the separation, and they are recognised within the Anglican Communion as two independent churches. She then invited the general secretary to say a word.

Dr Tveit added that it still makes sense to have a conversation at church leadership level before we take action accepting them as a formal member. Before the central committee, we still have time to do this, while for this church, it is important that action be taken in view of the next assembly.

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, asked about the central committee member from the Cook Islands Christian Church withdrawing its membership.

The general secretary replied that the representatives in the central committee from the Pacific region is chosen based on an agreement among the churches in the region. He invited comments from the executive committee on how to deal with the question.

Rev. Taaroanui Maraea explained that this year the Cook Islands Christian Church withdrew as a member of WCC, which is very sad. He said he would try to meet the church in July next year, to find out what happened. The general secretary suggested to leave the issue for the November meeting next year.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that the permanent committee on consensus and collaboration also considered the impact on small churches when balances are imposed on them to secure overall broad representation. Even if they have a youth delegate among them, it may be a challenge for the church, because who is likely to be responsible from the church? If representation were an issue, or the costs, it would be important to bring it up and have the body decide upon that.

The general secretary said that there is no indication that this is the reason, but that we will try to have a process leading up to the assembly planning committee. As to the question of Sudan and South Sudan, we should inform them about the way forward, which is probably not a problem for them, since the communion already have established two provinces.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios noted that with regard to the application of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) to be recognized as a specialized ministry with which the WCC has working relationship, there is a need for a letter from the Orthodox Canonical Bishops' Assembly, of which the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) is a member.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that IOCC is unique among the specialised ministries of the Orthodox churches. IOCC is in process of obtaining the letter from the assembly of bishops.

10.4 ACT Alliance

The moderator, Dr Abuom, then asked the general secretary to introduce the next matter.

The general secretary said that a conversation about the WCC and ACT Alliance Joint Day had already taken place and some issues to follow up were identified.

The moderator suggested that the matter be sent to the programme sub-committee for further deliberations.

The proposal was accepted by consensus.

10.5 Global Christian Forum (Doc. No 13)

Dr Abuom then asked the general secretary to introduce the next item for discussion and action on the Global Christian Forum (GCF).

The general secretary explained that the preparatory work was conducted by the deputy general secretary, Prof Dr Father Ioan Sauca. The summary of the discussion brought forward is understood to be a summary of a common understanding of the GCF, WCC's willingness to continue to work with the

forum, and also to develop a mutual accountability. This architecture is not easy to draw up, but it is our understanding that the forum is a platform that is useful and important, and should be maintained as such. The question is who mandates the forum to make statements, etc. There is a need for a common understanding, as the business of the forum should have a lower key. The new director is from Ghana and is a Methodist pastor in the USA. The executive committee is asked to approve developing a memorandum of understanding to be renewed every four years.

It was clarified that Rev. Dr Paul Gardner and Dr Dimitra Koukoura were the two representatives from WCC in the forum.

H.E. Archbishop Vicken said that he had met with the director of the GCF, who had asked him to be more active. He asked whether there anything that the GCF is doing that WCC is not doing. There are so many organisations. Everyone has interfaith work, for instance. Somehow, we are put in a difficult situation, because there are so many alternatives, groups and mailings. Is the GCF really an important organisation that we need to support, or is it something else and new that should be encouraged?

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim asked to know more about the constitution of the GCF, and the criteria for membership; are they constituted of institutions or single members?

Bishop Reyes explained that the forum serves as a platform for a broad Christian fellowship, but that it was intended to be a forum, not another organization.

Rev. Karen van den Broeke asked about GCF and its relation to the national ecumenical level. In the Netherlands, there is the Dutch Christian Forum, which mirrors the GCF. It works well because it helps to reach out, and to have a real platform for dialogue.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios clarified that the GCF was not new; it has a history of 20 years, and is continually growing. The focus of the forum is not to be an organisation, which is the struggle of the Council. GCF is not to become a structure and a copy of the council, but to remain a platform. The WCC is not alone in the forum: there are the four pillars, including the Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Catholics and WCC, with shared financial contributions. The uniqueness is that this platform includes churches that are committed to ecumenical work, but without being ready to join the WCC. They do not produce theological documents. It should remain a platform of discussion. There is a memorandum of understanding from 2013. It is time to go back and have regular revisions of this memorandum every four years, and particularly now after the GCF assembly in Bogotá, Colombia. We do not talk about member churches in terms of membership, members are only through the WCC pillar.

Archpriest Michael Goundiaev explained that there is a forum committee. The GCF was created as an initiative by the WCC, an idea of the former general secretary, Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, to try to involve churches who are not comfortable with joining the WCC or even the wider ecumenical constituency. All churches of the WCC are invited if they wish to participate in the forum. All those churches who are comprised by the World Pentecostal Fellowship and the World Evangelical Alliance are also invited to send people. The Roman Catholic Church participated from the beginning and contribute with financial support to the forum. There is a very wide participation not requiring membership.

It was clarified that all the participating pillars have two members each on the GCF committee.

Rev. Robina Winbush asked about the gender balance. If there were nine older participants and only one youth, she would challenge the WCC, because we have a commitment with keeping the balances. The other question is about the financial support. If WCC is a member body and we contribute as such, what does it mean that the GCF come to us, the member churches, asking for support?

Dr Abuom reiterated the question whether there is anything the GCF is doing that WCC is not doing.

Bishop Swenson said that there had been good conversations with the new general secretary when he was hosted in Washington DC. However, there were similar concerns as with the former general secretary, always asking for money, but never inviting us.

Dr Abuom summarised the discussion; there is a gender question, a financial question, and a question of which niche the GCF is filling.

Fr Mikhail said that if we speak about the themes and problems being discussed, there is almost no difference. But the GCF means something with respect to the variety of representation around the table. The general secretary added that, it was the WCC that saw that it does not have a relationship to all the churches we wish to have a relationship with. So the relationship with churches through the GCF has increased, particularly with the Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Also, they increasingly see themselves as part of the global ecumenical movement. The GCF is not a document-producing body. WCC has sometimes said things about common issues in a clearer way, so the added value is not documents. However, it is the conversation itself that is important, and that they are willing to have this open conversation. In our budget we have 80 000 CHF for GCF per year. This is money coming from our member churches. If member churches are willing to earmark more, we may be able to contribute more. As for gender balance, WCC appointed one man and one woman, but we cannot decide whom the others are appointing.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that one of the objectives of WCC is bringing unity to Christianity. We have to think. This committee, bringing together the four groups, needs to be invited to join us. Also, we could expect this forum to contribute to the WCC.

Bishop Simo Peura (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland) explained that the GCF has developed over 20 years. It should be important to us that our member churches understand the role that GCF has.

Dr Abuom concluded that the document would go to the nominations sub-committee. She reminded the committee of the memorandum of understanding from 2013, and that some clarifications have been made, and some questions have been raised, for the committee to deal with.

The executive committee agreed by consensus to send the issue to the sub-committee.

10.6 WCC 70th Anniversary Evaluation

Dr Agnes Abuom invited Mr George Lemopoulos to introduce the WCC 70th anniversary report.

Mr Lemopoulos introduced the document on 70th Anniversary Celebrations – an Evaluation and presented the programmes that had taken place in the course of the year 2018 to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the WCC. So far, events have taken place in 26 countries. There have been some strong moments, like the pope's visit to the central committee meeting in June, the celebration in Amsterdam in October, and the Ecumenical Weekend here in Sweden. Evaluating this, we have been able to arrange the anniversary in an unusual way, combining the celebration mood with important thematic events, not adding too much to the workload or the budget, but adding to the celebration.

It has been an extraordinary year, none of this is easy to organise, but colleagues did well. The PCPCU said that WCC is better organised than the Vatican, and member church leaders have responded very positively and organised events themselves, which shows the responsiveness of the fellowship of churches. Putting all the visits, meetings, seminars, publications and other events together, we get a meaningful picture of the anniversary celebrations. Mr Lemopoulos drew the attention to the document, where the statements clearly show a language used by friends. One of the elements playing a big role is communication. It covers the whole movement throughout the year, and there has been a story on the anniversary every week. Secondly, communications make a good mixture between what the WCC secretariat and member churches have organised. It is not limited to publishing event stories, but also to prayers and personal stories, which gives a different picture and brings in new dimensions.

These three elements are very important, as we are moving towards the next step, the 11th Assembly. One is that member churches are strongly repeating their commitment to the WCC, expressing an understanding that we are a fellowship of churches, our self-understanding. Secondly, what was adopted in Busan puts on our shoulders an obligation to continue working with the same strategic vision. The concept of pilgrimage gave a different perspective. However, we need to have a realistic picture of the pilgrimage in mind in the coming years. Thirdly, the pope's visit was wonderful, but there were also questions raised. Pope Francis chose to visit the WCC exclusively, which was not the case for previous papal visits. But, the relationship, the visit of the pope, and a co-organised meeting in Rome this autumn, are signs of something deeper and important. There have been many people asking how

we can build on it, keeping the ecumenical advantage this gives. These are some of the findings I wanted to bring to the table.

Dr Abuom, the moderator, thanked Mr Lemopoulos for his presentation and opened the floor for comments.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon said that the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church met two months ago. The catholic representatives in the group clearly expressed that the pope wanted to be in Geneva for the 70th anniversary and they stressed the necessity to reflect on the ideas that were expressed by the WCC general secretary and others. They have the feeling that we have one ecumenical movement. Although they do not belong to the WCC, there is still a sense of belonging. It was not only the pope personally who wanted to come to Geneva, but also important parts of the curia, because 70 years ago there were important symbolic happenings taking place, and they wanted to bring these up again.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim asked what we could get out of this for the future. How can we be more involved, how can we influence the whole world? This is the responsibility of the existing commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC. The group focuses on theology, but they also have an opportunity to sign a memorandum of understanding between the two. In many countries, the Roman Catholic Church is member of local and national councils of churches. This is a chance to ask the Roman Catholic Church to be a member, participating in the same way as they do in national councils of churches. We have to unite our ministries, particularly related to diakonia. Maybe the anniversary could be a new challenge and opportunity for all of us.

Ms Evans gave thanks for the report, and said she would be interested to know what type of events happened around in the different countries.

Mr Lemopoulos gave some examples of round table seminars, national councils of churches (NCCs) celebrations, university seminars, history seminars, WCC visits, and a variety of collaboration events on the 20 years anniversary. Most events were initiated by the councils of churches.

Bishop Reyes reflected on the pope's visit, saying that we should understand it as the result and achievement of the NCCs in each regions. In my country where the Roman Catholic Church is dominant, we have had great collaboration in at last three areas. These are against human trafficking, it is faith based humanitarian response, and it is work for peace. This affirms our understanding of being together as an ecumenical movement.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios gave thanks for the report and all the work done with the anniversary, not least with the visit of the pope. However, reading the speeches by the pope, they were quite careful, leaving no space to commit themselves beyond what they are able to. H.E. Monsignor Brian Farrell said at the end that for the WCC this means commitment to the CWME, the Faith and Order commission and the Joint Working Group. There is also the personal willingness to commit by the pope, but the church has not committed beyond that. They are committed to working together against xenophobia, for refugees and migrants, but they do not want to go beyond their inner or own ecclesiological position. The pope did not say something more about the space for Roman Catholics to participate in WCC activities. They participate actively in existing work, but in a very careful and sensitive way. It is very early to evaluate what the fruits of this visit may be. They have participated for more than 40 years in the JWG, making common statements, but they are still very careful about their own ecclesiological understanding.

Dr Abuom said that in Africa, out of around 40 Christian Councils, 13- 14 councils have full membership of the Roman Catholic Church. What implications do that have for us that they participate fully in the decision-making processes?

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul appreciated the comments made by the Metropolitan, but that she would like to add an additional comment. There is a careful foundation laid by the folks who have led the Faith and Order commission, the CWME and the Joint Working Group. Certain levels of trust needed to be built. It would not have happened without the careful cultivation of the leaders of this. Financially we still

need to recover from the visit, but I would have hope that there will be some impact and she asked that reflections on this continue.

Rev. Martina Viktorie Kopecká (Czechoslovak Hussite Church) said that she had been invited to Rome as an official representative of ECHOS. Her experience was that of being met by openness, meeting many people asking about WCC projects, and that she felt very welcome. She gave a short presentation on ECHOS, focusing on the youth work, and the interest was great.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios asked about Africa and why there is such diversity, where the Roman Catholic Church participate actively in some councils, and not in others. Do they not have a common strategy? Are they free to decide themselves, since we experience this variation?

Dr Bae said that there had been a visit from the Vatican, after having conveyed an invitation to visit North Korea, to which the response was positive. These kind of on-going initiatives by the WCC are informing the pope about what goes on in the Korean peninsula, and it has influenced the Vatican, who is now willing to play a more important role in the peninsula. In that way we can see some results of the WCC visit.

Rev. Cora Luisa Antonio Matamoros said that the good work that staff has done for this celebration, is helping the Latin American region. The visit to the region was also significant. T good relationship between the general secretary and the pope makes it easier. In our countries, Protestants and Catholics live together, but sometimes they act separately.

Bishop Swenson said that next month she would meet with the PCPCU, and therefore this conversation is very useful. They will visit in San Francisco in a couple of months, which will be important because they saw our good media coverage of the visit to the central committee meeting.

Mr Lemopoulos said that extent this is the product of the work done by the Joint Working Group is unclear. Once the common statement was drafted, it has become an official document of the Roman Catholic Church and is part of the directory of the church on the ecumenical movement. It is difficult to project what happens on a local level to a universal level, because of the ecclesiological understanding of the Roman Catholic Church. Because of the bishops' conferences, they can allow collaboration on a local level. But we can sense in the language of "marching together in unity", used by the pope and by the general secretary, that we are coming closer to each other. The ecclesiological statement may not have changed, but Pope Paul VI already said, "I come as Peter". Pope Francis concluded this picture by saying "I come as a pilgrim". This shows an intention and momentum. We have an ally on the other side. How do we make advantage of this?

The general secretary, said that this conversation is important for the records. The strong cooperation with Mr Lemopoulos and the communications team made this possible. The anniversary has benefited from this cooperation the whole year. It makes visible what it means to be a fellowship of churches, not only expressed in many events, but also expressed through the way it has been carried out. Others have seen WCC in a way that not experienced before, as a living fellowship of churches. We have seen that there is something we can call the one ecumenical movement, and that there is something affirming WCC as a leading agent, not in an exclusive way, but with a certain role to play. It affirms what is already going on. It is also about being what our member churches want, not only what the Vatican wants.

Firstly, we have seen events, secondly a message, and finally an impact. Regarding this impact, it is clear that the president of the PCPCU, Cardinal Koch, has had as an agenda for this should happen. It has been an important strategy for their work for unity. This can be seen in light of conversations we had with the pope relating to H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios' observations. There is no new statement, but the pope has repeatedly said that our unity must find different expressions. These expressions of unity in diversity is being used in a way that we have not seen before. There is also a strong commitment to try to find new avenues to strengthen relationship, through mission, diakonia and prayer. There is also a mandate. Talking with the Secretary of State, it is clear that they have a mandate

now that they did not have before. In Nicaragua, for instance, they want us to play a role. There is something new brewing.

Dr Abuom, the moderator, thanked everyone for their contributions.

10.7 Nominations

Ms Catherine Christ-Taha introduced the document on Nominations, explaining the pending nominations for governing and consultative bodies.

With regard to the nomination to Faith and Order, following the passing away of Metropolitan Dr Bishoy of Damietta, H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos said that in his understanding it is not the prerogative of one church to replace a member of the commission. Rather, it is to consider expertise and experience. Why not ask the Coptic churches to replace the outgoing person, or rather someone with the qualities from the Oriental Orthodox family?

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that when a member dies, the replacement should come from the same church.

H. E. Archbishop Aregawi said that in the Coptic Orthodox Church, if something happens in any Oriental Orthodox church, it must reflect something that can come from the Oriental Orthodox family.

The moderator asked that the list of members for the APC be provided. Mrs Glynn-Mackoul reminded the group that the Faith and Order Commission has its own by-laws.

H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima said that H.E. Metropolitan Bishoy needs to be replaced by someone from his own church, not by any other, even within the Faith and Order Commission.

H.E. Archbishop Vicken pointed out that this was not the case before the last assembly. Now there is a change in the composition of the executive committee mid-term, taking into consideration the different church families. The names of the two Armenians proposed as musicians to the AWPC, is one from France and the Holy See of Etchmiadzin, the second one comes from the Holy See of Cilicia.

Ms Christ-Taha clarified that the letter from the Catholicos of the Armenian Orthodox Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin) was to nominate a person for the Joint Consultative Group with Pentecostals.

Dr Abuom requested the members of the nominations sub-committee to consider the various categories and balances in the committees. In addition, churches who are not on the committees need to be considered.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that she supported the nomination of Dr Qawas for the audit committee. However, today the current executive committee is represented in the audit committee, including someone who is already in the finance committee. She asked that the nomination sub-committee consider that.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios commented on the request to appoint Dr Quawas to the audit committee that previous practice has been not to have someone on both the finance and the audit committees.

The general secretary clarified that regarding the issue of the audit committee, there needs to be representatives of both governing bodies and externals. The externals have normally been experts, financial professionals. This is now a new concept that has come to the fore.

10.8 Report of Personnel, Staffing and Nominations Sub-Committee

Bishop Mary-Ann Swenson moderated this decision session. She invited the moderator of the staffing, personnel and nominations sub-committee, H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima to deliver the report. He explained the process of the work in the committee, before presenting the report and recommendations of the sub-committee.

10.8.1 Moderator's Address and General Secretary's Report

The sub-committee received with appreciation both moderator's address and general secretary's report. Appreciation and encouragement of the general secretary's visits to the member churches were also expressed by the sub-committee members.

10.8.2 70th Anniversary Celebrations – Evaluation

The sub-committee received the report on the 70th anniversary celebrations with appreciation for the work of the general secretary, Mr Georges Lemopoulos (coordinator) and the WCC staff. Several member churches responded by organizing various events in their local places and the celebrations continue. Stories communicated on WCC website were appreciated and prayers written by various people for the anniversary were meaningful for the wider fellowship.

The sub-committee mentioned the following events:

- The June celebrations including the prayer service with HAH the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the central committee meeting and the visit of HH Pope Francis to the ecumenical centre

- The Amsterdam commemorative prayer service on the date of the first assembly

- The Uppsala events including the Joint Day with the WCC executive committee and the ACT Alliance general assembly, the Swedish Ecumenical Weekend (also commemorating 50 years since the Uppsala Assembly) and the executive committee meeting

- World Children's Day on 21 November including a presentation by the HAH the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I.

The particular importance of the visit of HH Pope Francis was also discussed by the sub-committee. This was a historical event and had great media coverage around the world. The events were well organized and the prayer service and speeches continue to challenge the ecumenical movement and encourage churches around the world to work more together.

Recommendations:

- That the general secretary ensure that a year-end wrap up (summary) of the events of the 70th anniversary celebrations be published in different media platforms by the end of the year

- That the general secretary present a report to the next executive committee meeting.

10.8.3 Evaluation of the central committee, June 2018

The sub-committee took note of the results of the evaluation of the last central committee meeting in June in Geneva and encouraged the leadership of the central committee to take them into account in the preparation of the next central committee meeting and make changes as necessary.

10.8.4 Central Committee 2020 Preparations

Based on the evaluation the sub-committee affirmed the suggestions in the document for improvements in planning the net meeting of the central committee. The sub-committee urged the leadership of the central committee to be more careful in the preparations, particularly in relation to consensus decision making.

Recommendation:

- An outside person be appointed by the general secretary as consensus consultant, to be present at the next central committee meeting and to work with the LCC and the moderators and rapporteurs of committees.

10.8.5 Dates and Venues of Future Governing Body Meetings

The sub-committee proposes the following dates and venues for the future governing body meetings:

<u>2019</u>

CC Leadership: 25-26 March, Geneva, Switzerland

Executive committee: 22-28 May, Bossey, Switzerland

CC Leadership: August, Geneva, Switzerland

Executive committee: 20-26 November, Rhodes, Greece (tbc)

2020

CC Leadership: January, Geneva, Switzerland

Executive committee: 12-13 March (contingent on venue)

Central committee: 14-20 March (contingent on venue)

CC Leadership: August, Geneva, Switzerland

Executive committee: 13-18 November (tbc – see comments below)

2021

Executive committee: February (tbd)

CC Leadership: tbd Geneva, Switzerland

Executive committee: May or June Geneva or Bossey, Switzerland

A formal invitation was received from the DRC and the URCSA to host the central committee meeting in 2020 and recently ten churches in South Africa have expressed their wish to co-host the meeting. The sub-committee expressed its appreciation for this invitation from churches in South Africa. It considered the options for the venue of the central committee meeting in 2020, i.e. Cape Town or Geneva. Alternatively, an executive committee meeting in November 2019 or November 2020 could be held in South Africa.

Recommendations:

- *The executive committee explore the possibility of holding the next central committee meeting in 2020 in South Africa and that*
- *The general secretary is asked to*
    - *consult further on the parameters of the invitation from the churches South Africa*
    - *provide an estimated budget for the meeting in both venues, Cape Town and Geneva*
    - *prepare a proposal to the executive committee members for decision by electronic means, e.g. with deadline for commentary and questions, and a deadline for decision*
- *The dates of the 2020 central committee meeting would be the following*
    - *Cape Town – 14-20 March*
    - *Geneva – 18-24 March*

The moderator opened the floor for discussion:

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim mentioned that there are huge conferences held in Johannesburg, Pretoria, as well. It might be an option to go to one of these instead of Cape Town. In this way the costs would be half.

The recommendations were approved by consensus

10.8.6 Nominations

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios proceeded to read the next recommendations:

A. Central committee

Recommendation:

That the churches in the Pacific region name a new central committee member with the profiles of woman, youth, lay as soon as possible.

The recommendation was adopted by consensus.

B. Assembly Planning Committee (APC)

Recommendations:

- That the person named to the central committee by the churches in the Pacific region also be a member of the assembly planning committee and that, in anticipation of the central committee's decision, this person be invited to participate in the meetings of the APC

- That the Conference of European Churches be asked to name a representative to serve on the assembly planning committee.

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

C. Assembly Worship Planning Committee (AWPC)

Recommendation:

- Rev. Kristín Tómasdóttir (F/O), Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (Switzerland) as the liturgist on the AWPC.

- Rev. Hrant Tahanian (M/O/Y), Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia) as member of the AWPC.

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

D. Joint Consultative Group with Pentecostals

Recommendation:

- That the executive committee forward the recommendation to the central committee that HG Bishop Datev Hakobyan (M/O), Armenian Apostolic Church (Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin) replace HG Bishop Vahan Hovhannisyan (M/O) and that HG Bishop Datev Hakobyan be invited to the respective meetings in anticipation of the decision of the central committee.

The recommendation was adopted by consensus.

E. Commission on Faith and Order (F&O)

Recommendation:

- That the general secretary is asked to be in touch with the Coptic Orthodox Church on their nomination to replace the late Metropolitan Prof. Dr Bishoy of Damietta.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim asked why some churches have participated for 40 years in some commissions and committees, e.g. the faith and order commission and the working group on climate change, while other churches have no representatives. We appreciate the ministry of people who have been there for a long time, but we also need to give the opportunity to others to participate. I would like us to consider the participation of my church.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios explained that a letter had been sent to all churches, but not all churches responded. There are turnovers in the commission and the working group.

The recommendation was adopted by consensus.

F. Audit Committee

Bishop Swenson, vice-moderator, moderated this decision session.

The sub-committee had received a memo from Ms Anne Glynn-Mackoul with concerns about the membership of the audit committee. Since the membership of the audit committee is limited to executive committee members and professional experts in this field, her proposal was not taken into further consideration.

With regards to the issue of a current member of the audit committee also being a member of the finance sub-committee (see Supplement to the Rules, Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee, point 4 on Membership) the sub-committee felt that the executive committee cannot overturn the

decision of the central committee[2], which had both named the person and approved the Supplement. Since the finance sub-committee has no separate decision making power, there is no real conflict of interest in this case.

Recommendation:

- The issue of membership in both the audit committee and the finance sub-committee be brought back to the next meeting of the central committee for consideration.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that the premise is that the executive committee cannot overturn the decision of the central committee. But, it happened that the executive committee elected a person in error, and in addition that person has been named for the finance committee, who has the responsibility. The Supplement to the Rules says that the member of the audit committee should not be someone who is a member of the finance committee. She suggested not postponing that decision for any more time. Someone else from this body needs to be elected to the audit committee. H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste has accepted and one more is needed.

Ms Evans asked what conditioning the finance sub-committee has. It was the central committee that elected members of the finance committee, while the executive committee elected members of the audit committee. I have the report of the nominations committee.

The general secretary said that his understanding was that the central committee elected these two committees at its meeting in June 2018.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul clarified that she was referring to the report by the nominations committee in June 2018.

The moderator asked that executive committee return to the question of nominations later.

10.8.7 Membership Matters

The sub-committee took note of and expressed its regret at the request of the Cook Islands Christian Church to withdraw from WCC membership.

The note was received by consensus.

A. Membership of the Episcopal Church of Sudan

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima continued to read the recommendations of the sub-committee:

Recommendations:

The executive committee is asked to:

- receive the request of the Episcopal Church of Sudan to be recognized as a WCC member church;

- forward this request to the next central committee for final decision;

- instruct the general secretary to research further on the situation of the Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan which became also an independent province and, whether, as having been part of the Episcopal Church of Sudan before 2011, the church should be also recognized as a WCC member church.

Rev. Robina Winbush asked what the third recommendation meant, as the executive committee had already been given information on this. The general secretary said that he had already been informed by the Province, because it affects them. The recommendation could be amended to read:

- instruct the general secretary to be informed on the situation of the Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan which became also an independent province and, whether, as having

[2] The election was made by the executive committee, not the central committee, during its meeting at Bossey, 13-14 June 2018. This error was realized after the meeting. It is corrected in the minutes of the May 2019 executive committee convened in Bossey, Switzerland.

been part of the Episcopal Church of Sudan before 2011, the church should be also recognized as a WCC member church.

The recommendations with amendment were adopted by consensus.

B. Application of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) to be recognized as a specialized ministry with which the WCC has working relationship

Recommendations:

The executive committee is asked to

- Recommend the application of IOCC to be recognized as specialized ministry in working relationship with the WCC according to Rule XVII;

- Forward the application to the next central committee for a final decision.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim informed the committee that this organisation is also a member of the ACT Alliance.

The recommendation was adopted by consensus.

10.8.8 Constitution and Rules Working Group Update

The sub-committee received the update on the working group with appreciation.

Recommendation:

The executive committee name Rev. Dr Henrietta Hutabarat-Lebang (Gereja Toraja) to strengthen the work of the constitution and rules working group.

A question was raised about the challenges because of the time difference. Did the committee consider anybody else? How about a young female central committee member?

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said that the choice was about experience, too, and that one cannot exclude people because they live in a different part of the world.

The recommendation was approved by consensus.

10.8.9 Report of the Joint Working Group Plenary

The sub-committee received the report of the Joint Working Group Plenary with much appreciation. It is encouraged by the growing relationship of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church and commends the current work being done together on refugees and migrants and on peace building.

The information was received by consensus.

10.8.10 Global Christian Forum

The report on the Global Christian Forum was received with appreciation.

Recommendations:

- That the executive committee receive the report

- That the executive committee instruct the general secretary to revise the Memorandum of Understanding, following the regular four-year cycle of revision, for presentation to the executive committee at its next meeting. The two WCC representatives on the GCF executive should be involved in the revising of the memorandum of understanding.

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim asked to be copied in the correspondence with the Patriarch. We would like to participate on the condition that the church will care for the expenses.

The report of the personnel, staffing and nominations sub-committee was adopted by consensus.

11. Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace

The hearing session was moderated by Bishop Dr Mary-Ann Swenson.

She called on Dr Isabel Phiri, deputy general secretary, to report on the pilgrimage.

Dr Isabel Phiri said that appendix 4 of the document gives a report of what has been done in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP) during 2018. Colombia has already been reported on, but there have been other activities in Jamaica and Brazil, in Latin America and the Caribbean, and a visit to Argentina, Nicaragua, Mexico and Jamaica. A question was raised during the general secretary's report about the Caribbean. But, a large part of Latin America has been covered in terms of activities. She concluded by saying that having a written theme is proving to be helpful, helping staff to work in an integrated way addressing member churches in a way they can relate to.

When working with churches in Asia, they have said that racism is not a theme. We have said that racism is a global theme. However, they chose that for them the main issues are building peace and upholding human dignity. We have agreed to this, and through these themes, can look at things using the lenses of racism. In a seminar at the Swedish Ecumenical Weekend, people were very excited about this focus on racism.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon commended the presentation and said that he hoped the PJP has not finished with Europe. There is the question of Ukraine, and there will be an assembly in Germany, but there is not much else in the report regarding Europe.

Bishop Simo Peura agreed. In Europe, there are historical pilgrimage routes, and many countries have been part of that pilgrimage route structure. On the Eastern side of the Baltic see there is a pilgrimage route to Norway and the cathedral of Nidaros. Would it be possible to look at taking care of these historical pilgrimage routes and integrate that into the programme?

Rev. Dr Manhong Lin (China Christian Council) said that the work planned for China is presented, but she asked how and with whom WCC is working. Dr Phiri responded that they have been working with the Amity Foundation, but she promised to find out about other partners. The invitation is to the member churches in terms of pilgrimage activities, e.g. the EKD has done quite a lot with regards to activities related to justice and peace. She encouraged the executive committee members to report on what is happening in other contexts and WCC will be happy to report on these.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said it was incumbent on her to bring the greetings to this group from the WCC and US group meeting in New York with the UN special rapporteurs on racism. There were buzz groups committed to work with the pilgrimage next year. She also expressed her gratitude for the pilgrimage in Palestine and Israel. This corresponds with EAPPI, but for clarification, does this refer to our visiting the PIEF programme?

The general secretary responded saying there is a lot of focus and related initiatives related to Palestine and Israel, we are working on these issues every day, through on-going programmes, with the challenges they imply. It is encouraging that the legal system of Israel, the court, decided that the decision on not allowing persons into the country was not legal. We are still waiting for the final message, but it is important that it got to court, and that the programme can continue. Some of us were involved in PIEF at the end of August. How we facilitate the wider circle of partners' involvement in the group will be discussed with partners at another meeting in the next month. It is a challenge to choose what of the work in the region is reported in the pilgrimage report, and what is reported elsewhere.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios said it is amazing what has been done. The limited resources from partners have been mentioned. Perhaps we could combine the various witnesses of our commissions. The Commission of Faith and Order is going to China for 10 days in 2019. Can this be combined with the pilgrimage, using representatives from member churches? In which way are the groups composed, in order to keep confessional, geographical and regional balances? It is important to invite people in the governing bodies.

Rev. Robina Winbush said that she herself had not participated in a pilgrimage, but she had appointed someone else with a special set of skills. However, she had been invited.

H.E. Archbishop Vicken thanked Dr Phiri for the excellent presentation. At the same time, he reiterated that a lot is being done in different parts of the world on justice and peace. He then mentioned that the Israeli prime minister is postponing a decision on churches who were forced to close their doors three months ago. The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA has been writing letters to the state. We have to be careful to give priority to those countries which are really in need. There is little here on Iraq and Syria, for instance. If we do not work harder, especially in Iraq, there will be no Christians left. The houses of Christians who have left are now publicly shifted to be the property of Muslims. People are leaving also from other churches, and clergy is escaping them.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim mentioned that somehow, for many projects, the ACT Alliance fail to meet the local churches. This is a moral principle, when we have any project in any country, the local churches should be contacted and invited to participate.

Ms Evans referred to a recommendation to the churches. When the central committee met in Geneva in June, there was a presentation where the ECHOS representative from Asia and the Pacific asked that when people are invited to the different groups, one should also talk to the young people.

Dr Isabel Phiri responded that the work has started on the guidelines and should finish soon. In terms of young people, women, youth, and also children, and those in leadership – both politicians and church leaders, as well as ordinary people – are on the lists to be invited, so there are many categories of people who are approached. When we focus on a region, we should also remember other regions. It is true that this year there were certain visits recorded in this report. However, for the Middle East, we have staff employed specifically on Syria and Iraq, one full time staff person for each of these, to help address the problems in those particular areas. Then, maybe we can improve our reporting, so it is more logical what is included where. Pilgrimage visits with commission members is a good proposal; this is being done already in conjunction with the CCIA, partly also the same with CWME, but we need to add the Faith and Order Commission.

12. Programme

Bishop Swenson moved on to invite Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber, moderator of the programme sub-committee, to present the work assigned to the sub-committee.

Bishop Bosse-Huber began by presenting the overview of all the documents. She then presented the document on the Follow up to the Central Committee Decisions on Programme. She introduced the update on the implementation of the WCC Strategic plan 2018-2021, and updates on the PJP and the Ecumenical Diakonia document.

What is not being presented is the central committee recommendation from 2016 on the EAPPI, which was discussed a bit under PJP. In 2016, it was recommended that EAPPI should have a comprehensive strategic plan, and there should be a consultation of all stakeholders, and a strategy for developing the EAPPI advocacy work. Initiatives were started in March 2017 and completed in 2018.

Bishop Bosse-Huber then introduced the 2019 reports summary and information on projects for 2019. The document covers the work of the WCC, the general secretary and assembly planning, public issues, diakonia, and further detailed programme plans.

She then moved on to give an update on the implementation of the WCC strategic plan and the work that needs to be done now. The executive committee is expected to monitor the strategic plan, which should also include issues on refugees and migrants and more. The pilgrimage has already been presented.

The WCC-EHAIA Base line study is presented to the executive committee for information. WCC programmatic work on racism is presented for information. Here the work on human rights, migration and indigenous peoples can be particularly mentioned. There is also a document on Populist

Nationalism presented for information along with a document on the WCC Engagement in Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The moderator and the general secretary already mentioned the 20th anniversary of the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. Information on the conference that took place in October 2018, in Kingston, Jamaica, is presented for information.

The Ecumenical Initiatives Evaluation – Timeline and Status Report is presented for information. Three initiatives have already been evaluated and initiatives to be evaluated in 2019 and 2020 are listed. There will be a joint session of the programme and finance sub-committees to discuss details.

The Communications update is presented for information, while the WCC Communications Strategy 2018-20121 is before the committee for action.

The Ecumenical Diakonia – Update is presented for information. The document has been revised according to the recommendations by the central committee in June 2018.

Bishop Swenson opened the floor for questions and comments.

Rev. Robina Winbush thanked Bishop Bosse-Huber for the report, and expressed her amazement for the work being done in comparison to the staff and resources available. She then asked what work has been done about racism, taking into consideration that it is also being a church-dividing issue. She also asked what the churches need to begin to deal with in this regard.

H.E. Metropolitan Nifon asked about the document on the freedom of religion and belief and about how much time WCC has given to the question of religion in the whole of the Middle East. The statistics are very alarming, that the cradle of Christianity is almost being emptied of Christians. We are talking about the Islamic world. While we know that in the Euro-Atlantic space there are millions of Islamic believers enjoying freedom, and mosques are being built. The situation is very different if you look at the Middle East itself. What do we say about the situation of being Christian in that part of the world?

H.E. Archbishop Vicken said that regarding religious freedom, the most persecuted religion in the world is Christianity according to figures from 2017. The question of religious freedom is extremely complicated. As WCC, we do not have enough power to reverse the situation, but we can speak with those countries and their leaders where persecution takes place, and ask them to pay attention to the situation of Christians, and at least defend the rights of Christians in their country. The current government in Iraq is presenting an anti-Christian law. The same thing happened in Egypt and the leadership said, “Give us time”, but what does that mean. The Christians disappear. Less than 1% of the people living in Jerusalem are Christians now. We have to focus on this; it is very serious.

Mrs Evans gave thanks for the detailed presentation. She then inquired about the implementation of the strategic plan and whether means of verification should be further refined by the executive committee or by WCC staff, to be presented to the central committee meeting. If we only now are putting on means of verification, what does this mean for the mid-term review and the final review? In the annotated agenda, we were asked to approve the programme plans. She was concerned that the budget plan was only presented today, and the programme report sent only a week ago. For us to review this, there is a lot of information to process. Some more consistency in reporting on quality, and how you measure it, would be appreciated. Because this is for information, I consider it as on going. The information on the ECHOS commission refers to on-going work, but does not give much information on what is going on.

Dr Agnes Abuom said that how we navigate all this paperwork is also a reflection of the work we do, at the same time it is a lot to go through. When you look at the document from Rome on migration and refugees, it seems we have almost forgotten that there are migrants into the global South, just as it was in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is something we need to look at. We are experiencing migration as groups of people coming into certain continents, but at the same time, we are being stratified into thinking that racism today is a race issue. It is a problem for Africa. Social media in Kenya for instance shows that the fight is going on. The church has not taken up this issue, and we need to widen the issue of migration, involving the nations involved, before it explodes.

Bishop Bosse-Huber thanked everyone for their comments which were noted. About freedom of religion or belief, there is need for a better overview. We have to face this in a stronger way than we have done in previous times. Also, our moderator has told us about racism; it is really a church dividing questions. Racism is inside our churches. We need to be honest. This is not about refugees far away, it is within our congregations. As for questions to the strategic plan, she passed the word to Dr Phiri.

Dr Phiri clarified that it is the staff who will be looking at what will be the indicators and the verification process. Bishop Bosse-Huber added that charting of the indicators needs to be done in collaboration. This is a first step, but we have to go further than we are now.

Mr Peter Prove said that we are increasingly concerned about the rising incidents with regard to freedom of religion and belief. Among those religious groups most affected by increasing intolerance are Christians, but it is essentially everywhere. Some seek to respond to this by addressing Christian persecution specifically, but without offering viable alternative solutions for the Christian communities in those regions. It is not possible to protect them in isolation from their society, without removing them entirely. The WCC has a long and noble heritage in the work for freedom of religion and belief, but it is also time to scale up WCC's current engagement. This means more resources, money and people. Hence, it is necessary to generate significantly more funds in order to increase that capacity. There is the special actor on UN accountability measures, but we know those mechanisms do not directly achieve anything. It is, however, an important soft power, which is underutilised. We can use those resources at a higher level, presuming that we have the resources and capacity enabling us to do so.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul gave thanks to the moderator Dr Abuom and Mr Prove for their sensible reactions. She reiterated the refrain of "protection of Christians is peace for all people". There is church-building going on in Syria, but the idea of citizenship and local integration is important. We have been celebrating our closer relationship with the Holy See and also with the UN. As far as EAPPI is concerned, whose responsibility is it? In the area of peace in the Middle East, when ecumenical initiatives in Palestine and Israel are described, the Palestine and Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) is not mentioned. Is there a separate ref group that has been appointed? Who is appointing those and what about the local churches? We need to unpack that, because we have come through a bit of a rocky period.

H.E. Archbishop Aregawi was appreciative of the report. He then commented on racism in Africa, confirming that it is a global issue. In Ethiopia, we can see many different nationalities. Normally we experience good tolerance, but sometimes racism comes up in specific ethnic areas. Racism is not only colour racism, but also ethnic racism between people of the same colour. Even between people of the same language and religion, ethnicity can be the source of racism. In the Middle East, in Palestine and Israel, we have seen different conflicts around historical places and heritage sites. That is also one of the main problems between these countries. In Egypt, they can speak the same language, but racism between Christians and Muslims exist. In Nigeria, they can speak the same language, but come from different locations. This shows how racism has different aspects to it. In Somalia and other places, Muslims have attacked and killed Christians, even recently. In my understanding, the church should stand up against it, protect Christianity, and work hard for human rights.

The general secretary, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, said that we are touching many big issues here. To the question of PIEF and the Middle East, he responded that there was a meeting in August considering how to move from a PIEF working and not working according to its mandate. PIEF's role cannot be to act on behalf of WCC, but for and in cooperation with WCC. It also needs to work with our member churches and partners. We need to learn from this mandate, and how it was conducted some years ago, because it caused a lot of risk for WCC. It is a very complicated arena. We have to be there to do the work, advocacy work on an operational level with an office there, facilitating visits etc. We agreed that we now have a more common understanding on how this forum can work, within the consultative group, but also the wider group of facilitators. When we say the Middle East, the countries of Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, all are different contexts. But, there are also some similarities in the challenge – how to accompany churches and cooperate with the local churches regarding visits,

facilitating visits and accompaniment, organising different initiatives, as well as doing advocacy work, e.g. in Egypt, in collaboration with church leaders in Egypt. There is a politicization around the question about how we as church leaders react on very specific issues, which has not been specifically mentioned, even if it is being worked on. In the next weeks, there will be a meeting with church leaders on freedom of religion and belief. It is not just a matter of religious communities, but it is about the stability of whole societies. We need to raise these issues with partners that are not only nationals, but for instance also with the Middle East Council of Churches. How do we prepare statements on the situation, which contributes to the better, than what we would do without them? We need to do this better, and in close collaboration with the churches and with one another.

Dr Phiri said that there are different manifestations of racism. A study group within the PJP undertook an initial brainstorming on the issue of racism. Racism is not only about skin colour, but it comes in various forms, we need to study it from within the context. Racism has been studied from a theological perspective in Japan. We are not starting from scratch; a lot of theological work has already been done. We need to look at what is already there, and to see whether it is still relevant, or if we need to add something new. The UN general assembly has said that it is in the best interest of the UN to work with faith communities. The faith communities are not withdrawing from the UN, and the UN would also work with faith communities.

Rev. Karl Johnson (Jamaica Baptist Union) contributed his thoughts on racism. There is an element to the discussion that speaks not just about the present or the future, but also about looking at the past and talk about the matter of restorative justice, which can be called reparation. It is an uncomfortable subject, but we feel strongly about it, it is affecting how we relate to some partners, particularly in Europe. This needs to be put into the mix. There are still many Europeans who are yet to apologise, they have used oral gymnastics, they have issued regret, they are sorry, but they are yet to apologise, and that means a lot to us. A second point is how we will help to rebuild some of the wealth that has been taken from us; how will they repair some of the infrastructure damage that now affects family life, health and education. It works itself in many ways, and reparations have to be put on the agenda.

Dr Ayokunle said that this needs to be recognised as evil. In some Islamic nations, in terms of religion, they appear to be totalitarian nations. The winner takes it all, and those people has the right to worship God according to their tradition. In Nigeria, Muslims enjoy their religious freedom, but not everybody else, and this inequality has to be brought to the fore. Where Christians are worshipping they are being dehumanised. A young woman was captured with others in Dacchi, and our government went to negotiate with them. They thought it was wisdom for them to punish those who did not convert to Islam. She was made a prisoner. Some of you have no experience in it; some of us deal with it on a daily basis. We know how dehumanising this is. Religious freedom is very crucial to any nation. They know what they do is wrong, but we cannot deceive ourselves. They take young kids and marry them. We question these things, we need the One Body, and we cannot fight our battles alone. We are not telling them to do what is wrong, but we are saying that religious freedom is a principal freedom for every individual, and that means that they will enjoy it as well. We must underline that it is for everybody to enjoy religious freedom.

Dr Asana confirmed that these are complex situations with complex questions not solved in a day, a session or a week. Shall we because of persecution go back to the crusades and fight – certainly not. WCC can still be relevant in these issues as it has been in the past. If South Africa is independent, the role of WCC is not absent, both Tutu and Mandela expressed it. We are going through a certain trend in this period, experiencing that there are things we cannot do. But our voice is very important, and there is still much to do. Even when my brother apologises for what was done in the North to the South, most of those things are still being done. WCC is still very relevant, even in relation to the UN and the efforts should continue.

Bishop John F. White (African Methodist Episcopal Church) said that his concern was that in all of the conversations the issue we are facing in America of children being separated from their parents is not yet addressed. There should be a statement from the WCC on this issue. The challenge is that people

cannot even get visas or get into the country. If we do not address that, we would do injustice to America, also to the Latin Americans who have found a place to get a fresh start.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim referred to a recommendation in the programme plans for 2019, saying that it is important to inform member churches through the members of the central committee when there are initiatives taken by actors like the UN, and the international community. These can be involved at the expense of the church itself. This way we can get more people involved, including people who go back home and organise seminars in their churches. This is about capacity building. As member of a founding member church, we could get more information about the situation on Christians and Muslims, as many of us live in Muslim countries. Secondly, we would also like to be more involved in programmes on sustainable development and climate change. Our churches can cover the expenses of participation in such programmes.

H.E. Archbishop Vicken said that we are sometimes cruel to the leadership, because we do not always think about limitations of resources and staff. He therefore expressed gratitude and congratulations, and asked God to give them power.

Rev. Robina Winbush said that in the US context Christians tend to hold a certain place of privilege and that we have to be mindful of this, we struggle with this. In a Christian minority context, it is different. We need to be careful to talk about Christian persecution from a majority context, because the situation is not the same everywhere.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke said that a challenge regarding Christian persecution is that many of these stories are being used by the populist voices in our countries. Instead of a one-sided focus on persecution, she would prefer to speak about peaceful coexistence between different religions.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked about the status of the Ecumenical Diakonia document.

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos said that in every nation the situation is different. In the US, the situation of persecuted Christians in other parts of the world is used against minorities. In India, it is especially difficult, because the persecuted groups do not retaliate. However, at the same time, it should not stop us from saying anything.

The general secretary was invited to comment on the Ecumenical Diakonia document. He explained that both the LWF and ACT Alliance had already approved the document in the form that went to the central committee meeting. However, the organisations are aware that the document is going through a process of revision.

Dr Abuom thanked the executive committee for their comments, and asked the programme sub-committee to look at possibilities for integrating relevant proposals.

12.1 Report of the programme sub-committee

Later in the meeting, Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber, moderator of the programme sub-committee, was invited to present the report. She said that the sub-committee had interesting discussions on the moderator's address and the general secretary's report. She then invited Rev. Karen van den Broeke to read the report with recommendations.

12.1.1 Moderator's address

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *receive the moderator's address with gratitude;*
2. *strengthen the mutual cooperation with other ecumenical partners on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially on gender justice, and social and economic justice;*
3. *strengthen cooperation with The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) on the work for children especially addressing poverty and violence.*

12.1.2 Report of the general secretary

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee

- receive with appreciation the report of the general secretary and affirm the work of the general secretary and staff.

12.1.3 Follow up on central committee decisions on programme work

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee

- receive with appreciation the update on follow up to the central committee recommendations on programmatic work.

The moderator opened the floor for discussion.

A proposal was made to request the general secretary to encourage member churches to second or fund staff in order to strengthen the capacity in Geneva and in other places. Ms Evans supported this proposal, e.g. with regards to the recommendation on UNICEF.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul raised a question about recommendation on SDGs and whether this would have implications connected to concerns raised by member churches on the language in another document. She also inquired about whether this has to do with the relationship between WCC and the ACT Alliance. Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber clarified that this recommendation came out of a discussion on gender justice, economics and issues that were part of the general secretary's report. Rev. Karen van der Broeke said that especially on gender, economics and social justice the sub-committee had noted that we have to strengthen each other's work on this same area.

Rev. Robina Winbush stated that this would not be the time to address questions of structural relationships, but rather recognise that here are areas of work that overlap, and that the WCC has responsibility to bring to the table the breadth of our confessional families.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that the intention was to get the spirit of the proposals from the reports. Our churches are unique. However, if there are ecumenical organisations working towards our objectives, we do not have any fear, and encourage the leadership to carry on the relationship.

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

12.1.4 Update on the Implementation of the WCC Strategic Plan 2018-2021

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *receive the Report with appreciation;*
2. *request the general secretary present the indicators for the expected outcomes for 2018-2021 to the executive committee meeting May 2019.*

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

12.1.5 Activities Related to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace update

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *receive the report with appreciation;*
2. *recommend the general secretary encourage the participation of members of executive committee and central committee in Pilgrim Team Visits as far as it is possible in terms of finances and local resources,*
3. *recommend the general secretary combine Pilgrim Team Visits with other programmatic work.*

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

12.1.6 EHAIA Base Line Study Update

The programme sub-committee discussed the theological work that has been done on capacity building to engage in a comprehensive HIV response. The work of EHAIA helps to reduce stigma and discrimination and invites people to develop positive masculinity and positive femininity.

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *receive the report with appreciation;*
2. *recommend the general secretary strengthen particularly the WCC-EHAIA work on access to HIV prevention, testing and treatment.*

Ms Evans asked what was meant by strengthen certain work. Bishop Bosse-Huber clarified that in the EHAIA document there is a discussion on the theological work on sexual identity, and the understanding of the Bible. There is also the part about HIV/AIDS. We need both the theological as well as the practical work within the EHAIA programme.

Bishop Swenson was comfortable with the language. She recently came from a meeting at the UN in New York, where they had been working on strategies on addressing HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in children. Mother to child prevention is a key element. Also stigma, prevention of stigma, and education are important areas of work. There should be no problem with how it is worded here.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim Kykotis, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, said that we must be clear that WCC follows the Bible. Secular organisations follow their own rules, talking about free rights. We need to strengthen the cooperation, but be aware of this.

The general secretary suggested a reformulation to clarify what areas of work should be strengthened.

Dr Ayokunle felt there could be a lot of problems associated with this. There are many countries in Africa where reparations would have to be made. We need further emphasis on the forgiveness of one another for the past, but in a decisive effort to make sure that there will be no repeating. Going through reparations will cause so many problems.

Rev. Karl Johnson said he hoped we would retain this as a goal as an important part for which we need to work. Reparation is a biblical theme. HIV/AIDS is not a matter plucked out of the air; there are specific areas and aspects that will need reparation.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul wondered why it was made reference to a thematic priority for 2019. Is the highest priority gender justice, or is it racism.

Dr Ayokunle said that the question is not answered on how to achieve this reparation. What is it the countries need to give as reparation? This is in relation to slavery and so on.

Dr Agnes Abuom, the moderator, said that countries like hers sort under the same category.

Rev. Robina Winbush said that it is a difficult conversation on several levels, but it is one that needs to be continued, because it is that discussion that explores how relationships have been broken and how they can be restored.

Bishop Bosse-Huber explained that the sub-committee had felt that there were two things to highlight – both racism and gender justice. This is based on signals from the address we received from the moderator, the report of the general secretary and from agencies. She further clarified that highest priority does not mean only one subject, but that the issue is of the highest level of priorities. At the moment, these two questions are at the highest level of priority, and one should not be put up against the other.

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

12.1.7 Racism in the programmatic work of the WCC update, Report from the World Conference on Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism

The programme sub-committee discussed racism as a church-dividing issue. It underlines the importance of continuing the discussion on restorative justice and reparation to people from African descent and indigenous people.

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *receive the reports with appreciation;*

2. *affirm the strategies formulated in the report and emphasize that this work needs highest priority in programme planning;*
3. *propose that the theological study group of Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, meeting in Japan in 2019, address the theological underpinnings of racism;*
4. *recommend the general secretary continue to work on this with the UN Working Group of Experts on People from African Descent.*

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

12.1.8 World Council of Churches Engagement in Promoting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FORB)

The programme sub-committee discussed the deep concerns on the growing threat of people persecuted, especially Christians. It highlighted the important work of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs on this issue and appreciates the Pilgrim Team Visits that already have been made or are planned to Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist majority countries. The committee noted that the WCC had organised a consultation in Albania in 2015 (with the Global Christian Forum) on Christian persecution.

The programme sub-committee took notice that the context of, e.g. the Middle East or Pakistan, requires a different approach from that of Europe and North America. In all contexts, it must be clear that religious freedom should be secured and enjoyed by all.

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *receive the report with appreciation;*
2. *reaffirm the importance of the work of the World Council of Churches on freedom of religion or belief;*
3. *request the general secretary to resource and to strengthen the work on freedom of religion or belief for all people;*
4. *recommend the general secretary develop strategies for cooperation with member churches and partners on their initiatives on freedom of religion or belief.*

A discussion took place on recommendation number 3, questioning what was meant by “resourcing”. It was suggested to amend the recommendation to read:

3. *request the general secretary to make efforts to resource and to strengthen the work on freedom of religion or belief for all people;*

The amendment was adopted by consensus.

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

12.1.9 Report from the Global Consultation for the Commemoration of the Culmination of the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women

The programme sub-committee discussed that, although a lot of work has been done since the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women was launched; there are increasing problems and huge challenges. The programme sub-committee is grateful that there are positive signs of churches becoming safe spaces for vulnerable people and appreciates an increasing number of ordained women in some churches. Despite these positive signs, the programme sub-committee noticed that violence against women, including econom exploitation and domestic violence, has increased in brutality. The consultation in Jamaica made visible that violence against vulnerable people remains a key issue for the World Council of Churches.

The programme sub-committee underlines that the World Council of Churches as a worldwide ecumenical body has a crucial role to play by offering a platform for exchanges on experiences, sharing knowledge and good practices, and by supporting local, national and global gender justice initiatives, advocacy and action.

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *receive the report with appreciation;*
2. *affirm the strategies formulated in the report and emphasize that this work needs highest priority in programme planning;*
3. *request the general secretary provide an updated plan for four years for the work on just communities of women and men to incorporate the outcomes of the Jamaica consultation;*
4. *request the general secretary strengthen the work on just communities of women and men through more advocacy, theological reflection and action on the worldwide, national, regional and local levels;*
5. *request the general secretary to integrate the Thursdays in Black campaign in programmatic work.*

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

12.1.10 Ecumenical Diakonia – Update

The programme sub-committee discussed the Joint Day of ACT Alliance and the World Council of Churches and looks forward receiving outcomes.

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *receive Ecumenical Diakonia Update with appreciation;*
2. *request the general secretary to take an initiative to arrange a meeting between the executive committee of World Council of Churches and the ACT Alliance executive in the near future, or with representatives of both bodies;*
3. *request the general secretary to present an evaluation of the Joint Day of ACT Alliance and World Council of Churches in the next meeting of the executive committee.*

Ms Evans asked about the timeline for the initiative to a joint meeting. A discussion took place on the timing. Dr Phiri suggested that the general secretary meet with the executive board of the ACT Alliance, which meets more often than the WCC executive committee does. The general secretary suggested that "in the near future" be added to the recommendation.

The amendment was carried by consensus.

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

12.1.11 Programme Plans 2019, Programme Plans 2019 Summary

The programme sub-committee discussed the problem that information about work in some conflict regions is not shared, e.g. in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine and Korean Peninsula. Silence is often misunderstood as WCC being absent or inactive.

The programme sub-committee underlines the approved recommendation mentioned that the indicators for the strategic objective 2018-2021 be further developed for review.

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *receive the reports with appreciation;*
2. *approve the Programme Plans 2019;*
3. *request the general secretary to present in the next committee meeting May 2019 a review of the methodology of budget planning including criteria for when qualitative and quantitative indicators are the most helpful and to develop the budget plans;*
4. *ask the general secretary to clarify with the help of the working group on constitution and the rules the mandate of the reference groups and commissions to strengthen the programmatic work;*

5. *ask the general secretary to share information on a regular basis with churches and partners that are already working on countries where silent diplomacy is necessary and to provide adequate reports to the executive committee or the central committee.*
6. *request the general secretary to take into account the participation of all stakeholders in WCC initiatives, proper consultation with the WCC member churches and the regional ecumenical organisations in the region;*
7. *enhance the sharing of information about the programmatic work of the WCC to the constituencies.*

To a question regarding sharing of information in recommendation 5, Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber explained that partners working together closely do inform each other. It is not about detailed statistics. It about what is feasible. She then suggested adding "as much as possible" to the recommendation:

> *5. ask the general secretary to share information as much as possible and appropriate with churches and partners that are already working on countries where silent diplomacy is necessary and to provide adequate reports to the executive committee or the central committee.*

The amendment was carried by consensus.

The recommendations were approved by consensus.

12.1.12 Joint session: programme sub-committee and finance sub-committee

The sub-committees met to receive a report on the categories of funds allocated by project, and the reasoning for the relative allocations; as well as the schedule for evaluation of the ecumenical initiatives and other projects, together with the dates of the last evaluations. Further, the financial profile for 2019 was discussed, together with the budget risks.

1. Report on categories of funds allocated by programme and project

   The report on programme income types, and their allocation, revealed that in 2019, CHF 9 million, or about 50% of total programme contributions, could be considered as "institutional", where WCC may determine the allocation, or the allocation may be determined in discussion with the funding partners concerned. A further CHF 9 million in programme contributions are restricted to specific projects, including the ecumenical initiatives.

   The programme sub-committee expressed appreciation for the considerable degree of trust that funding partners accorded to the WCC, which ensured that contributions could be applied according to programme priorities.

2. Budget risks 2019

   In presenting the financial profile for 2019, three budget risks were emphasised:

   - Programme fund balances would be low in value in 2019, and careful monitoring would be required;
   - It was assumed that general reserves would cover a transfer of CHF 300,000 at the end of 2019, towards the cost of central committee in 2020; and
   - A delay in the Green Village project, and in particular the Kyoto sales transaction, would result in an increased call on the general reserves to cover interest on the loan.

3. Evaluations: ecumenical initiatives and other projects

   The joint sub-committee received an update on the evaluation of three ecumenical initiatives and the proposed schedule to complete the evaluation of another three initiatives in 2019 and 2020. The joint sub-committee noted that only one other project was scheduled for evaluation, and that there had been no evaluations of other projects in recent years, other than the ecumenical initiatives.

The joint sub-committees expressed the desire to strengthen monitoring and evaluation; and to move forward with an evaluation of more projects as requested in November 2017. It noted the importance of self-assessment and advised that not all evaluations needed to be conducted by external consultants. It suggested that the guidelines for evaluation documented in November 2017 be sharpened, including the type of evaluation warranted by particular projects, or not.

Recommendation:

With reference to the programme sub-committee Report from November 2017 and to the update on evaluations from November 2018, the programme committee recommends that further work be done to develop a comprehensive approach for the evaluation of projects and that an update on ecumenical initiative and project evaluations be presented to the executive committee in May 2019.

The recommendations were carried by consensus.

The programme sub-committee discussed the limited human resources available for programmatic work.

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee request the general secretary to encourage member churches to second or fund staff in order to strengthen the capacity in Geneva and in other places.

It was explained that the finance sub-committee concurs with the recommendation of the programme subcommittee that further work be undertaken to define guidelines of self-assessment and internal evaluations of projects, and that a plan and schedule for such evaluations be presented to executive committee in May 2019.

The recommendation was carried by consensus.

The report of the programme sub-committee was adopted by consensus.

13. Communications

13.1 Communications and community building

Dr Agnes Abuom moderated the hearing session. She invited Ms Marianne Ejdersten to present the report on communications.

Ms Marianne Ejdersten, WCC director of communications, presented highlights from WCC communications work. Firstly, she mentioned the WCC public website, which has had 65-75,000 visitors in the course of the year. Communication should be a like a mirror of what we are doing, when we communicate with member churches, and externally, with media and partners around the world. We try to communicate the most important part of the life of the WCC, not only the work done by staff. About one third should reflect the leadership, one-third the ongoing programmes and one-third the living fellowship. We receive quite a bit of interest for the website these days. Next time we meet, we will have a brand new website. The most important is that we have a website working well.

Secondly, she explained that for social media, Facebook is in many ways similar to a magazine with weekly updates. It makes a difference when we receive material from you and member churches, but we also collaborate with our partners, and they post it in their own channels. Their Facebook page is mainly like a local magazine in relation to us.

Thirdly, twitter is the best way to publish statements, or the prophetic voice of the WCC. Here we can find a link to a statement, photo and short text. There is the possibility of tagging a person or a church or a diocese, which works for networking. We can reach out to 100,000 people within hours. One example is from the US, where we had 125,000 followers within half an hour. It is possible to work together, but timing is crucial. That is a way of reaching out as a prophetic voice, with opinions and news.

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos asked how many followers the WCC Twitter account has, and Ms Ejdersten explained that it is about 45-60 000, which is not quite enough when it comes to an organisation as WCC. Out of these about 55,000 are unique people, not repeats, but that these are based on old tools, we need a new system in place. He added that if we were able to provide some strategies, it would provide more publicity for us, and help external media by providing stories.

Ms Ejdersten responded that there is a huge interest in feature stories, e.g. on racism, preferably a story of hope and with a local example. Secular media interest has also increased.

Rev. Cora Luisa Antonio Matamoros mentioned that there are people with experience in communications, who have taken pictures from the webpage and attached it to other sites. There have been interviews with people that were misused and twisted in social media. We must be careful with anything we say.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked whether the WCC is affected by and protected against internet trolls, etc.

Ms Ejdersten said that we could probably do much more, but we try to protect our account, following up with trolls, and also blocking them. Even if they disagree, we try to spend a few minutes on them. Some lobbies we know quite well, and they almost respect us these days, since we always communicate the official statements of the WCC.

H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos replied that there is no need to be scared of trolls. It is a positive sign, as it means that we are a voice that needs to be taken seriously. Ms Ejdersten agreed, e.g. for water justice issues there were more than one million trolls. We should always focus on treating them respectfully, but not use all our time on them.

13.2 WCC Communication Strategy 2018-2021

Ms Ejdersten then proceeded to present the WCC Communications strategy. The strategy is articulated around the WCC strategic objective 5: Inspiring and innovative communication. The strategy includes the following focal points:

- Fellowship Communication
- Prophetic Communication
- Advocacy Communication
- Capacity-Building
- Accountable Communication
- WCC Communications: An Ecumenical Window

Dr Abuom thanked the communications director for the report and the strategy and opened the floor for comments and questions.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked that this be seen in connection with the budget. Ms Ejdersten confirmed that the department has been working closely with the finance department.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim expressed his appreciation of the report. He shared that from a recent trip to Armenia, where communication with partners was experienced immediately.

Dr Abuom thanked the committee for its comments and the communications team for its hard work. She added that there is a need to communicate with our member churches' twitter and Facebook accounts, so that messages from Geneva is shared in our churches. Financial viability and budgets are important to discuss, so that the larger picture of communications is communicated back to us.

13.3 Communications Strategy Revised

The programme sub-committee discussed how the landscape for communication has changed and therefore requires a stronger prophetic voice. Today there are many actors broadcasting church messages. It underlines the need of programmatic work to strengthen the specific role of being a worldwide body and having the opportunity of being a platform and a vibrant network. The

programme sub-committee discussed the opportunities of strengthening the voice of the World Council of Churches as a fellowship.

In terms of the communication strategy, the programme sub-committee discussed that the executive committee needs a stronger prioritizing of the programmatic work and needs a long-term planning of the communication strategy, so that communication can invite member churches and stakeholders more effectively.

The programme sub-committee noticed that Thursdays in Black Campaign is a good example of a joint ecumenical initiative that took time but is gaining prominence.

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee:

1. *approve the Communication Strategy Revised with appreciation;*
2. *request the general secretary to present a strategy for WCC communication in a ten years' perspective and abide to the strategic plan 2018-2021 during the next executive committee meeting in May 2019.*

The moderator opened the floor for comments.

Ms Evans using the word "more" and strengthening of the work. Bishop Bosse-Huber explained that this reflects what came out of Jamaica. The term "more" may be hazardous to use. But at the same time, about gender justice we realise that not done enough has been done together. This is also about member churches, the whole of the WCC. Our feeling is that the question of racism is also urgent. Maybe we can do this work better, let us be serious about these question. "More" means better, more seriously. She further clarified that it does not mean adjusting the budget.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked for an explanation to the suggested 10-year period planning. Bishop Bosse-Huber explained that both the period for programme planning and for a communication strategy had been discussed in the committee, suggesting to make plans for a longer time, e.g. for ten year periods, for both programme planning and for communication. The experience was that to work on communication plans only from one year to the next does not work well. Mrs Glynn-Mackoul said that the general secretary's terms are for five years. Would not the period from one assembly to the next assembly be too much time? The general secretary responded that normally planning is from assembly to assembly, for two terms, which means that now the plan goes to 2021. We cannot bind the organisation beyond this term.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim said that when reading the proposal carefully, it is a draft. It is up to the leadership to come to a set plan. H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos suggested that if one has a draft plan, you need to start implementing it, not to create a problem for the future, which is beyond our mandate.

Bishop Bosse-Huber said that it took a decade of planning the reformation jubilee, though there was a new synod in the meantime. The planning was more about the overarching communication to ensure that we have more of a common topic. The discussion in the programme sub-committee was about finding more effective plans for communication. Now, there are so many different things communicated that it is difficult to see what it is the WCC really doing.

The general secretary said he understood the point of view, and suggested to reserve the word plan for what we want to do in a four-year period. However, one can have strategies or scenarios with a 10 year perspective. One could say: "Present a communications strategy with a 10 year perspective", and then apply the strategy to the plan for 2018-2021.

The recommendations were adopted by consensus.

13.4 On Communication Update

The programme sub-committee recommends the executive committee *receive the Communication Update with appreciation.*

The recommendation was adopted by consensus.

The full report of the programme sub-committee was approved by consensus.

14. Staffing matters

Dr Agnes Abuom moderated the session. The session was a closed session.

The moderator invited the general secretary to present the staffing report. The general secretary presented the report, which was for information only. He also informed the executive committee members that due to the budget situation, some vacancies have been extended with a limited amount of time.

H.E. Metropolitan Gennadios, moderator of the APC, asked whether the planned time in contract of the assembly coordinator would be sufficient time for following up the assembly. The general secretary then said that an extended period would have to be negotiated, and the matter be brought back.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim noted that there are many people employed from Europe and North America. He asked that candidates from Africa and Orthodox candidates be considered for employment.

Ms Evans said that in a period of six months, WCC has lost many people, which does not balance with recruitment, which was alarming. She said she would be interested to learn more about the process of retaining the quality staff that WCC has in place. What is the process for exiting employment, and are there any exit interviews?

The general secretary explained that there is not a challenge to maintain people, as most programme executives would like to stay for ten years or more. For the programme executives who finish by the end of contract, they have chosen to do so themselves. Then, interns are there for some months; these are short-term contracts for special projects. As for resignations, it is beyond the duty of the general secretary to go into details about each person. The challenge for programme executives is that many would like to continue beyond the maximum ten-year period. In some of the staffing reports, there are better balances in the lists of in-coming and out-going members of staff. This particular list seems unbalanced, but must be seen in relation to the previous presentation, where some in-coming staff were presented. An annual performance appraisal process is place.

Dr Abuom referred to the negative scale in the report, asking how the process of deciding salary is done. It was proved that some of the salaries of female employees were on the lower side, but that there is now a process in place to secure equal salaries. The general secretary affirmed that efforts had been made to secure equality in salaries with respect to gender. He explained that there has been the practice to give a salary increase when there is a renewal of a contract. The Swiss general index shows no inflation, so there is no general request for an increase of salaries. For the organisation, this is quite helpful. However, we are revising the salary scale looking at what can be changed in order to further improve the situation for employees.

Dr Abuom said that these are things the personnel, staffing and nominations sub-committee need to look at, because as an organisation there has to be a clear framework.

Mrs Glynn-Mackoul asked how the work load is being managed. It seems that some vacancies are open for a longer period of time, but what impact does that have for the work load of persons?

The general secretary responded that there are a lot of expectations to our staff, not only programme executives, but also from administrative staff. WCC has a committed staff who work very hard. We have tried to regulate working hours more strictly, avoiding overtime expectations except when related to special events. This has been done with some success. A system is in place to record the working hours of staff, both to control work hours, and to be in accordance with Swiss law. Some are working very hard, beyond what we ask, and there are some extra burdens connected to the vacancies. We try to organise work accordingly, to avoid too high a pressure. WCC's plans are ambitious, both for programme and also administrative tasks. Particularly this is connected to the building project. It is a challenge to balance the ambitious plans with working hours, but we continue to work on this.

H.E. Archbishop Aregawi said that some staff would be leaving. They come from different regions, and have professional backgrounds. That a programme executive position is open means that we in general have to let anyone qualified apply. One particular challenge is to recruit enough Orthodox staff persons for different kinds of positions, and he asked that this be encouraged. In addition, it is not really correct that there is a regional misbalance, because WCC really makes an effort to have regional balance among staff. However, pay attention to positions that are open and think of people you would encourage applying and supporting them.

The staffing report was received by consensus.

15. Search Committee for new general secretary

Dr Agnes Abuom, the moderator, informed the executive committee about the elected search committee. Rev. Dr Paul Gardener was elected as moderator of the search committee but for personal reasons he has stepped aside. In addition, the committee is short of one member. The person with second most votes would be next in line to be moderator, and that is Rev. Prof. Dr Fernando Enns. Then, the first substitute is Rev. Dr Henrietta Hutabarat-Lebang, who would become a member of the committee. The moderator explained that the list presented was based on the election by the central committee. To reach further balances, the personnel, staffing and nominations sub-committee will have to deal with it before the executive committee confirms the complete search committee.

The information was received, and the process was agreed by consensus.

H.E. Metropolitan Serafim asked what the executive committee would do about the shooting and kidnapping in Cameroon. Dr Abuom thanked His Eminence for the reminder and informed the executive committee that the general secretary has issued a statement. The general secretary read the statement, before the executive committee prayed for Cameroon.

16. Closing acts

The moderator, Dr Abuom, acknowledged the pressure on time at the meeting. She also recognised the importance of the Joint Day with the ACT Alliance, and the input to the evaluation of this. She expressed gratitude for the Swedish Ecumenical Weekend, and the time to hear from church leaders on church life in the country.

She then thanked the members of the executive committee for bearing with the leadership and all the help and support in moving together with consensus. This is a heavy transition period, and there are still some challenging but necessary decisions before us, and we will be trying to move together. She apologised if there were some who did not feel listened to. She also expressed hope that there would be time at the next meeting to share more information from the member churches.

The general secretary added to the gratitude towards the Swedish hosts, which will also be expressed in a formal letter. Hospitality has been generous and ecumenical, and the weekend has also been important for the Nordic region.

The general secretary also thanked his colleagues for all the hard work put into the meeting, both before, during and after the meetings. He then continued by thanking the executive committee members for their contributions, and the leadership of the central committee for their hard work. He concluded by wishing everyone God’s blessings and safe journey.

The meeting closed with a prayer.

17. Appendices

17.1 Participants' list

Leadership	Dr Agnes Abuom, Moderator
	H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima, Vice-Moderator
	Bishop Dr Mary Ann Swenson, Vice-Moderator
	Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary
Members	
	Rev. Cora Luisa Antonio Matamoros
	H.G. Bishop Dr Abune Aregawi
	Rev. Dr Festus Asana
	H.E. Archbishop Dr Vicken Aykazian
	Rev. Dr Samson Olasupo Adeniyi Ayokunle
	Rev. Dr Hyun Ju Bae
	Bishop Petra Bosse-Huber
	Ms Emily Evans
	Rev. Celina Falk (substitute from 5 November)
	Mrs Anne Glynn-Mackoul
	Archpriest Mikhail Goundiaev
	Rev. Karl Johnson (substitute)
	Rev. Martina Viktorie Kopecká
	H.E. Metropolitan Serafim Kykotis
	Rev. Dr Manhong Lin
	Rev. Taaroanui Maraea
	H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr Nifon of Targoviste
	H.E. Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos
	Bishop Simo Peura (till 5 November)
	Bishop Rex R. B. Reyes, Jr.
	Rev. Karin van den Broeke
	Bishop John F. White
	Rev. Robina Winbush
Apologies	
	Rev. Dr Paul Gardner
Advisers	
	Mr Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, ACT Alliance
	Fr Heikki Huttunen, Conference of European Churches
Minute-Writer	Ms Beate Fagerli

Staff Leadership Group

Ms Elaine Dykes	Director, Finance
Ms Marianne Ejdersten	Director, Communication
Prof. Dr Isabel Phiri	Deputy general secretary
Fr Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca	Deputy general secretary

Staff

Ms Diana Chabloz	Assistant to the general secretary
Mr Douglas Chial	Manager, Income Monitoring and Development and PMER
Ms Catherine Christ-Taha	Coordinator, Conference Office
Ms Beate Fagerli	Coordinator, 11th Assembly (as of 1 January 2019)
Mr Mark Johnson	Manager, Finance
Mr Georges Lemopoulos	Coordinator, WCC's 70th Anniversary
Mr Peter Prove	Director, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

17.2 Moderator's address

MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

THEME: PRAYING, WALKING, WORKING AND REMEMBERING TOGETHER

Preamble

Sisters and Brothers in Jesus Christ, on behalf of the leadership of the World Council of Churches (WCC), welcome to the executive committee meeting and to the city of Uppsala. We are grateful to our Swedish member churches and ecumenical organizations for their words of welcome, for hosting this meeting as part of our 70th anniversary celebrations; and of course for their generous hospitality that we have already partaken of.

We come here also to commemorate the WCC 4th assembly held fifty years ago in this same city in 1968; whose theme was "Behold, I make all things new". Uppsala is a significant stop on our long ecumenical pilgrimage as a fellowship of churches; for it was here that Archbishop Nathan Soderblom of the Church of Sweden spearhead the Life and Work movement that has over the decades become the Justice programme pillar of the WCC. For me, Uppsala evokes many good memories as I spent a number of years making me call it my second home. In fact, it was from this country that my serious walk and work in the ecumenical movement begun many decades ago. You are welcomed to continue praying, walking, working and remembering together as we continue to celebrate the 70th anniversary.

I. A Brief Recap of the Global Context in 1968

The time the 4th assembly met, the global context was charged and characterized by a number of events that shaped the assembly and whose impact I submit still haunts/dogs us as a fellowship of churches. What were the events of the day?

- The decolonization agenda where the countries in the global South were clamouring for autonomy for their colonizers;
- A growing civil rights movement in the USA led by non-other than Martin Luther King and in particular the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and racism;
- The Vietnam war that impact most American families;
- Student activism was felt all over Europe;
- The United Nations implementation of the first Development Decade;
- The cold war was gaining currency as those new nations of the south also aligned themselves accordingly.

From the WCC and fellowship perspective, there was growth in the membership especially after 1961 Delhi assembly; and matters of Church and Society following 1966 conference took on a wider perspective than the northern hemisphere. It is here in Uppsala that racism was named as a SIN, and a violation of the scriptures. These challenges informed deliberations and programme directions of the WCC in the coming years. Some of the decisions were later to create cracks in the fellowship. However, the fellowships choose to affirm and commit to work for the dignity and human rights of all people.

II. Some Global Trends and Issues Today

A number issues and global trends, continue to inform our prayers, pilgrimages and action, and will form part of our reflections and possibly action during these coming days together.

1. Xenophobia, racism and populist nationalism although they were low key for a while; they have resurfaced in a forceful manner and rearing their ugly heads without shame. The global nature of the manifestation should be a serious concern for all of us. Indeed, the global consultation organized by WCC and the Vatican not only illustrated the worldwide phenomenon but the need for us as

Christian organizations and churches to do our own introspection in order to root out the tendencies. Waves of populist nationalism pose threats to human life and dignity; but stand also to erode democratic and human rights gains so far achieved and for which WCC has been an advocate for many decades. Besides democratic leaders are slowly pushed into the back seat as conservative ones take over. This trend seems to generate and unleash forces FEAR making it increasingly difficult for people to have constructive space for the "other", as the other is profiled as an enemy.

2. Raging Wars Unabated – Current wars in Syria, South Sudan and Yemen just to mention a few, are a rude reminder of the war in Vietnam of the 1960s; on the other hand, the mounting militarism is concerned mainly with the so called "war on terror" and peace and security architecture. The people in the war zones wonder and ask: Whose peace and security? The weak and vulnerable sectors of communities for example, women, children, the elderly and people with disability suffer most. Current statistics show that half of the world's poor are children, nearly 700 million face adversity every day (20218 Multidimensional Poverty Index); UNICEF also reports that 2.6 million babies die before they are ONE month old, of these 1 million die a few minutes after birth, prior to this 2.6 million will have died even before they are born. 1 out of 4 children die in conflict, while 2.5 billion face poverty and violence. What is so sad is that according to UNICEF 80 per cent of these deaths are easily preventable.

3. Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) – Sexual and Gender Based Violence is perhaps the most rampant pest as it increasingly becomes a global phenomenon with very minimum if any serious governmental and nongovernmental action. In conflict spaces, rape remains a weapon of war and a pass time for the men in military and non-military attire; but in general violence whether domestic or in the public space are on the rise. The question is why?

There are movements like "me too" and "Thursdays in Black" seeking to draw attention to the problem and create awareness. But who is listening to Rachel crying for her children and herself? Think of the millions traumatized today and that of the children born out of these violent circumstances. It would seem as if there is a correlation between the reversal of democratic values as well as religious values and ethics and the heightened incidences of violence and moral decadence in society.

The WCC has a long history of women and gender work but is our voice and message as clear and loud on this matter today? Yes, we have statements, how can we lift up more clearly that it is a matter of life and death; and yet unfortunately the victims and survivors of violence have had no choice. We have heard narratives of commodification of human life, about transaction sex and all forms of violence taking place. How can we get to understand the depths, heights and implications of this disease on our present and future? Stop for a moment and think. A girl child of ten years wakes up one morning and is told, you are a widow because your husband of 90 years plus is dead. Is he a husband, a father, a grandfather, a great grandfather? What does widowhood mean to a ten-year-old? What is her future? What are her dreams and hopes for life? What would you do as a pastor, church worker, parent, aunt, uncle, etc.?

The stories of SGBV from around the world should vex anger and ignite a sense of urgency in all of us. Here at Uppsala the WCC discussed difficult and troubling issues of the time. It was a time when the faith of our leaders was tested. It is my considered submission that matters related to SGBV that so deeply dehumanize the dignity of children, women and even men is a test of our time. This issue of SGBV is at the heart of how e related with one another, how we perceive the "other" and how we use or abuse scriptures. Today SGBV is a pandemic in the world which to use the words of the English writer Charles Dickens, is "a bleak house". For many whose voices are drowned by the mighty, whose tears are ridiculed and whose identity and dignity is denied. Indeed, we stand on a cliff and the common humanity we ought to share is in my view aptly captured by the words of the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe when he writes, "Things Fall Apart, the centre cannot hold" women as care givers, carriers of life and those who nurture life are themselves threatened. Thus a major pillar of society is shaken to the foundation by forces of death. How then can the house stand? How can the community of women and men be just and remain healthy and wholesome with the rise of SGBV unabated?

III. Review of Programmes

As we review our programmes, take note that this executive has a lot on its plate namely to think through the upcoming general assembly which will be facilitated by APC; ensure a smooth and constitution compliant leadership transition; above all ascertain that programmes remain aligned to the mandate given in Busan. This year 2018 has been a year of praying, walking, working and also remembering and celebrating of this far God has enabled the ecumenical movement to register achievements and difficult moments of the journey. This year presents us the opportunity to project in to the future of course informed by the dynamic and ever changing contexts of the member churches. May I humbly request us to review programme work in light of the WCC transition, reduced numbers of staff and strategize on how to more engage churches in the work.

IV. Transition Moment

Organizational management tells us that transitions can be challenging if not well planned for and carefully navigated and managed. As people of faith, we plan and more important allow us to discern God's move. Our transition phase begins already in 2019 as we prepare to hold the 11th assembly and hand over leadership of governing bodies of the WCC. It is essential that as the executive committee we begin to think of:

(a) The milestones of the current governance. How has it worked and what are the gaps. This is necessary because present governance structure and its responsibilities were the outcome of the reviewed constitution and by-laws. And as you recollect, a small team was appointed by the last central committee to look at the constitution and by-laws and propose any amendments.

(b) Another issue to consider is what are we leaving/bequeathing the next team that we can be remembered for? It may require personal and collective reflection and documented. I am not engaging the end term evaluation of the entire WCC but us and our responsibilities.

(c) In the history of the ecumenical movement, there have been ups and downs like any organization and movement. What challenges do we as WCC have and continue to face and how can we overcome them. It is known that what makes the difference in addressing challenges is how the leadership of the particular time discerns and handles the challenges.

(d) Consensus Decision making approach – as we prepare for the next meetings, we are encouraged to reflect on how the philosophy and practice of consensus has worked. How have we engaged key terms such as, Discernment, Common Mind, Listening to one another and hearing minority voices?

Conclusion

This executive committee meeting is expected to receive reports and to give guidance on decision making on the Assembly theme which the central committee did not do because of time limitation; the venue and time for the next central committee meeting; review status of the Search Committee membership ensuring required balances; Finance e.g. Risk Management of the Green Village; and programmes. The general secretary's report will provide us with more details.

Thank you for listening and may our meetings be fruitful and allow your memories of the ecumenical journey be jogged while here at Uppsala. May we be encouraged and assured in our work by this biblical verse, "I will appoint peace as your overseer and Righteousness as your taskmaster" (Isaiah 60:18b).

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

Rape cases are among the most serious, and if not addressed, they can ignite a big fire in concerned communities… If my sister is raped by a young man, and I have not [avenged] her,

I will live in shame forever… if another young man provokes a sister, rapes and/or beats her, it is always considered a challenge against her brother, and it is always a duty and responsibility of a brother to avenge by fighting the culprit.

Sometimes the conflict between individuals escalates into a fight between groups and creates long lasting animosity between them. Young women and girls are harassed in their offices and organisations…[and] there is no complaint mechanism in place. Policies and procedures are not being created by the government [to handle cases of harassment]. Domestic abuse was also raised as a serious concern among Abkhaz youth. As stated by one young person: The gender question has been very current of late… in relation to the growing number of cases of domestic violence, including murders. If we stay silent and do not react, we allow this problem to continue. If you look at our parliament, among the deputies there is only one woman. Many consider a woman's place to be at the stove in the kitchen – this is a very old-fashioned point of view. Women and men do not have equal access to many resources, especially in politics.

For me when there is no firing and shelling, it is peace. When children do not become victims of mine blasts in my village, it is peace. When I see my mother going to the fields to collect wood and graze animals, it is peace. When I see children playing in the common fields or grounds then I consider it peace.

17.3 Report of the general secretary

REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

1. Meeting in Uppsala

We are grateful to be invited and so generously hosted by our member churches here in Sweden and by the Christian Council of Sweden. With our executive committee meeting here 50 years after the 4th Assembly, we are reminded of how the Uppsala assembly gave new directions to what is today the WCC and the ecumenical movement. This is also the city and the cathedral of Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, who gave so many impulses to what later became the World Council of Churches, particularly through his initiative for an unprecedented gathering of church leaders and representatives in Stockholm in 1925 – for peace.

The commitment to the WCC by the Swedish churches and the many dimensions of our agenda in the Swedish churches have been remarkable and continue to be a great inspiration for us who have our daily work in the WCC, as well as for the those who carry the responsibilities in governing bodies. We benefit from your active participation in many of our committees and commissions. I mention here particularly the tireless and extensive work for the WCC by its President for Europe, Archbishop Emeritus Dr Anders Wejryd, as well as the other members of the central committee, Bishop Eva Brunne, Ms Celina Falk and Rev. Sofia Camerin.

As a Norwegian, I also enjoy being the guest of "Söta bror" – our "sweet brother" – and sister! We admire everything that is bigger here than among your neighbours: your big houses, halls, cities, and churches. Also your hospitality is remarkable, as you have shown the world in so many ways – for example, to Norwegian refugees during World War II – but also in these most recent years to many who have knocked on your door for asylum or for work and a new home. You have also demonstrated your responsibility for the world and for people in crisis in so many ways. As a nation and as churches your contributions to justice and peace are formidable. Now we experience this again as the WCC meeting here, the fellowship of churches to which you are so strongly committed.

Anniversaries – Looking Backwards and Forward

I have often pondered the theme of the 4th Assembly, "Behold, I make all things new!" The formulation is a biblical quote from the Book of Revelation, chapter 21, not a book we often refer to in the "ecumenical canon" of texts we most often employ in our discussions and prayers. In English, the

formulation seems archaic to me. The perspective is the eschatological horizon, the new heaven and earth. But I have always understood the outcome of the Uppsala assembly as turning the WCC toward a more modern approach to the world (it was 1968!) and urging the churches to focus more on the enormous challenges of *this* world.

A key to understanding how the assembly had an impact on the theology and the work of the WCC, is the word "anticipation." The orientation toward the new became also an inspiration for transformation according to the new, the coming kingdom of God. Anticipation became participation, more than before. The hope for God's making something new also meant contributing proactively to something new for the people who hunger and thirst for righteousness and peace *now.* The focus on hope for something new gave a stronger orientation toward participation and toward becoming the agent for change. James Baldwin, who on a short notice stepped in after Rev. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, strongly challenged the church representatives to understand that they could make a difference, for example, in South Africa and in the struggle against racism and against military dictatorship. So the significant Programme to Combat Racism was established sometime after the assembly.

The eschatological dimension of our faith. Sometimes I get questions about where the eschatological dimensions of our faith are expressed in our ecumenical reflections and our prayers. The anniversary year has given me some moments to reflect on this. One aspect of remembering 70 (or 50) years passing lies in the sense of our lives as limited and passing by. They made their great contribution then; many of them are gone now. We have our particular time in which to contribute, to make a difference. One moment to recognize this is when we in the beginning of every central committee meeting remember those who have died and gone before us into God's eternal memory, into God's reign and God's care.

The ecumenical movement has been seen – and rightly so, I think – as emphasizing that we are called to live in discipleship here and now for the transformation of the world according to God's will today. "Let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The Lord's Prayer reminds us always that this is the other side of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come." The eschatological dimension of our lives, including life eternal, is both a matter of what lies beyond time and what is a matter of concrete qualities, of life in abundance, here and now. What unites the two dimensions are the characteristics and presence of the reign or realm of God.

Without the eschatological dimension, we might become simple materialists or pursue only an imminent, political agenda. Everything would then be limited to what we achieve in this world. The alternative, that is, focussing only on life after death, has been caricatured as "pie in the sky bye and bye." For many, perhaps most, honest believers it has been a hope that kept them going through many tribulations and pains and losses, and that promise has given strength to be salt to the earth and light in the world. Still, it is a real risk that such a focus overlooks the needs of our neighbours here and now and those who come after us, if we are too focused on the life after this one. This was and remains a real challenge in some Christian faith communities. A much greater risk, however, is that the believer's focus is turned from "heaven" to the "world," yet not to the needs of others, but solely to our own health, prosperity, interests, even wealth. "Why give such priority to stopping climate change when we believe that God will create a new heaven and a new earth?" The question was raised in an article I read recently. Well, what is the answer to that? Because God loves the world, because God loves the human beings living now and those coming after us.

There is a unity in love that also has an eschatological dimension. Love transcends death. We continue to love our loved ones even after they are gone, and their love remains with us as a treasure. Yet there is more to be said. We are called to be one so that the unity that is in the Trinitarian God should also be reflected in the unity among us: The mutual love in God should be the model for our unity, so beautifully expressed in John 17: "even as you Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (21). "I made known to them thy name,

and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (26).

It is in this perspective that we read the reports of Uppsala, reflecting on the unity of the church in the light of the hope for something new. "The church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of [hu]mankind." As a sign and foretaste of the unity of humankind, the church is always called to express God's love in Jesus Christ—not as a hope favouring any of us but a shared hope, a hope than should unite us human beings. God wants the world to believe, to receive, to be renewed and united according to God's love. We need a renewal of this commitment from the 4th Assembly in a time when so many forces are driving the world and humankind into divisions, polarization, even new forms of dictatorship and disrespect for human rights and dignity; when profit and power are driving motives more than care for our common home and all who live here. We must renew our calling, our drive toward justice and peace, and we must clarify even more why and how we are doing so as a fellowship of churches.

The assembly theme in eschatological perspective. That is also why I think the proposal for the theme for the 11th Assembly – "The love of Christ compels us" – which we will spend time discussing carefully here - brings us back to our common origin in Christ and therefore to the triune God who promises to make all things new. But it also connects us well to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace as a way to describe the ecumenical movement. And it opens up another dimension of the ecumenical movement: as an alternative to the many other approaches to the world, also in the name of religion and our own Christian traditions: an open and inclusive, radical expression of love in our time.

Time is passing, and we with time. Yet we remain one with the many believers who came before us, those who have shown their hope as an anticipation that leads to their participation in the mission of God. Their faith and their hope give us hope, too. One of the leaders in the ecumenical movement who is now gone reminded me often that the martyrdom of those who kept the faith and the truth about the loving and coming kingdom of God, always remain the strongest proofs for the truth of our common faith.

One of those who have been working together with many of us in the executive committee and the central committee, was HE Metropolitan Prof. Dr Bishoy of Damietta from the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. In the central committee in June, he reminded me again of the call to carry the cross given to us by Christ. He also reminded me to do what I could to care for the unity of the churches in the WCC, and particularly how his church family, the Oriental family, could be able to participate well in our work in the future. May God bless his memory among us.

The WCC does express and should express these signs of hope in different ways. But how can we express more clearly that this is a hope that is nurtured by and upheld by Christ's love? We do it in many ways, in our daily work as churches and as a fellowship of churches, and even beyond the membership of the WCC.

The 70th anniversary. This anniversary year has brought us more information about the legacy of the WCC, the initiatives behind it, and the many important events and significant programmes from 1948 onward. The anniversary also has brought much more attention to – and expectations of – the contributions of the WCC. This is a very good result of the many efforts to make the anniversary inclusive, marked and celebrated around the world in many churches. The events in June have had a strong echo in many places. The communication about what happened has brought the WCC and its history and efforts and fruits to light in the churches and far beyond them. I have been privileged to participate in many events since June that have elaborated the work of the WCC and its calling today. They have been inspiring and encouraging, but also challenging in a good way. I am asked what is the situation now, where are you going? In Amsterdam on 23 August we had very special celebrations, of course. But there have been others: Discussions with doctoral students from many countries about the relationships among Orthodox churches and other churches, and their role in the WCC (in Pro Oriente in Vienna in July), celebrations and discussions in Jamaica, Barbados, Norway, and many other places.

Let me share some reflections from some of the encounters with member churches in the last months:

2. Visits to churches in the Caribbean

A visit by the general secretary of the WCC to member churches in the Caribbean region has been discussed and planned for a long time. I was in the region for 12 days, and I had the privilege of seeing our member churches in Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Antigua. I also attended the first day of the consultation and addressed the group marking the 20th anniversary of the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, in Kingston, Jamaica.

We had meetings with the leaders of member churches in all these countries, with the council of churches in Jamaica and in Antigua, with our members of the central committee in the region (who accompanied me for different parts of the visit), and with the Conference of Bishops in the Province of the West Indies (as they met in Barbados). I had the privilege to preach in the Baptist church in Jamaica, in the Anglican cathedral in Barbados and in Lebanon Moravian Church in Antigua; and I participated in vespers in the St Benedict Monastery in Port of Spain, Trinidad. I had extensive interaction with theological students and faculty in UTS in Jamaica, and met with the head of state (the Governor General) in Antigua, the Catholic Nuncio for the Caribbean Region based in Trinidad, and the Ethiopian Archbishop of the region (in Trinidad). I had several interviews with media.

This is, in terms of numbers, one of our smaller regions, and they are often seen together with the churches in Central and Latin America. They have their own characteristics, contributions and challenges, though, and have had their own regional council of churches: The Conference of Caribbean Churches (CCC). There are three issues from this visit I will bring forward in this report:

a. The significant contributions from this region to the worldwide ecumenical movement.

Several ecumenical events have taken place in this region, like the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in 2011. The legacy from the WCC general secretary, the late Philip Potter, is honoured. I heard several references to how much WCC-based initiatives in the past have meant for them. Many contributions to the ecumenical movement for spirituality, mission, justice and peace are coming from these churches, even if they do not always have a lot of financial resources available.

The churches in the Caribbean are strong centres for worship, spirituality and formation. Some of them have schools. They are significant in size, relatively, in their contexts, and are highly respected and have influence in their societies. Visiting local churches also gives a further sense of what life in the church is like for ordinary members. They also have programmes for *diakonia* and addressing the challenges of the time in their region.

Historically, the churches that somehow were brought to the islands from other parts of the world, but that became the churches of the slaves and their descendants, became their own churches with their own profiles in their respective confessional families. They are holding their ground, in most places; but the fastest growing religious community seems to be the –Seventh Day Adventist Church. Many of these churches have very important experiences from the past, especially in relation to how the church contributed to liberation and fellowship and unity of the liberated and how the churches also have had a role in building the free nations. The strong communities of African descent have also nurtured and further developed different dimensions of African culture and spirituality there.

Music is a very important dimension of the culture and the life in the churches, as in most churches, but I have a sense that it has a very special role in these churches.

The challenges of today relate to very high figures for violence, particularly domestic violence, human trafficking, etc., the need to mitigate the effects of climate change and the many hurricanes, and these are addressed by the churches in different ways. My sense was that particularly in this respect they missed and need a stronger regional, common voice.

b. The revision of ecumenical structures and relationships

In all conversations with church leaders and national councils of churches, the situation for the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) was raised as a great concern. In some conversations there

was also a concern about how the relationships to the WCC could be strengthened, how the WCC could be more visible and close to them.

Many of the questions related to contact with and participation in the life of the WCC could be addressed by offering more information about the programmes of the WCC and our many channels for information and interaction with programmes, staff and initiatives. There is a great appreciation for what is done, when they now hear about it. But the conversations also underscore the need to prioritize capacities and resources in relation to the work we do in communication. The communication strategy to share life in the fellowship through sharing stories and what the churches are doing, is confirmed in that sense.

The CCC has very weak organization at the moment, with very few activities and resources available for its work. This was mentioned and affirmed by all, including the general secretary of the CCC, Gerald Granado. There have been long delays in meetings of governance and plans for an assembly have been long postponed. There were explanations for this situation. Diminishing resources, diminishing capacities to work to get the resources available, but also diminishing interest from the churches when the work of the CCC faded away due to the same reasons. I observed a need and a commitment to change the whole approach to the joint ecumenical regional body from asking "What is in it for us?" to "Why do we need this ecumenical body for our common calling here in the Caribbean region" and to "What can we do to exercise our responsibility for the CCC and contribute to the work of this fellowship?" The questions were also raised as to what can the WCC do in this situation.

The conversations gave us an opportunity to reflect on the history, objectives, and the needs for renewal, but also on the WCC relations to the regional ecumenical bodies. I tried to bring into focus, though, that the churches themselves should define and express that the CCC is their body, take ownership of it, and open a new route toward a new beginning.

The need to raise their joint prophetic voice against violence, against gender discrimination and gender-based violence, against human trafficking, for good governance, etc., was expressed in many ways.

The WCC role in such processes is hopefully to give new momentum (e.g., through visits like this and other encounters) to the discussion; to support new practical initiatives among some of the member churches; to start a process for revision and renewal; and to define what are the visions, needs, expectations and potential contributions from the member churches themselves in the region. I also believe that developing tools and competence for more communication between the churches in the region could have a very positive effect.

c. The Just Community of Women and Men and the consultation in Jamaica, October 2018

The churches in Jamaica did a great job (on short notice) of hosting the consultation in October to mark the 20th anniversary of the culmination of the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women. This was happening as I visited Jamaica, and I could participate in the first day. This will be reported and discussed also in other ways, but I think it is relevant to address some of the issues in that consultation within the framework of my visit to the Caribbean.

The results of the Decade are many. It encouraged the churches to focus on the situation of women in the churches, in their communities, in society, in their families. It also encouraged churches to see, recognize and use the gifts of women in the churches, according to the rules and regulations of the churches, but also to revisit such rules and practices in light of the shared reflections.

I was encouraged to see that the gifts of women were recognized and expressed in the member churches I visited in different ways. In many of the churches there were now women in leadership positions, according to the rules of their churches about ordination and leadership. The president of the Jamaica Council of Churches is a woman, and also a former Bossey student, Rev. Merlyn Hyde Riley.

I was also encouraged to see awareness of how much gender-based violence happens in the societies of the Caribbean, even how many murders happen in families – most of the victims are women. The drastic and very worrying reality shows how urgent it is that the churches develop a strong voice and commitment to address gender-based violence. The violence against children in families is connected to this.

In this perspective, I see a strong call to the churches and to the WCC as a whole, but also the wider ecumenical movement, as we relaunch the Thursdays in Black Campaign. It has to do with care for justice, peace and the unity of humankind at its most critical and intimate point: in domestic life and among near relations, as well as in religious communities. We have also to make efforts as men to show that this is not an issue for women only. It is about changing morally wrong, sinful and very shameful tendencies of men exercising violence against women. The need for gender justice has its most urgent and obvious reasons here. A family, community and society where there is no justice or proper care to prevent such violence is no good for anybody, not for women, men or children.

Violence is one expression of injustice. There are, however, many other expressions that might lead to violence or acceptance of gender-based violence, which has to do with attitudes, practices. The Decade brought these issues – and many others – to the attention of us as a fellowship of churches. We need to keep this in focus as a basic element of justice and peace for all.

In this regard I am quite concerned when I see and hear a tendency in some of our ecumenical meetings to argue against a focus on gender justice. I hope this will not be a trend, and trust that we seriously reflect with proper sensitivity and care for one another on how to promote a truly just community of women and men in all our relationships and communities. This is what God has called us to do in the most fundamental setting of our faith and life: to love God and one another us ourselves. How could this not be the basis for everything we say and do about family relations, our life in the churches and in the communities?

In this context I want also to express how important it is that we as churches together in our ecumenical bodies make sure they are safe spaces for everybody, also safe in respect of harassments and different forms of violence. The respect for one another must express the love we are called to share with one another. This must be real and practical, and experienced by all. Even if the churches have different traditions and regulations about the role of women in the churches, this concern for how the churches can be spaces of respect, safety and care should not be taken off any table where we meet to address justice and peace. We should pay attention to the situation of persons and communities that experience exclusion and violence due to being different from others in their sexual orientation. I know these are issues where the churches have different opinions and rules about marriages and relationships, etc., but nobody can be excluded because of who they are and nobody should ignore violence against those who are more vulnerable than others in this respect. We have a very qualified and hardworking advisory group on human sexuality. It is moderated by President, Anders Wejryd, and we must now have a well prepared process for the reception and discussion of their report toward and in the central committee in March 2020.

3. Joint Ecumenical Efforts for Justice and Peace

The Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace continues as the overall perspective on our plans for this period, but also in many initiatives, visits and accompaniments to and with our member churches and ecumenical partners. These are reported elsewhere. I have been involved in some of them, and I want to share my reflections on two of them.

In July I was invited to address the assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in Kigali, Rwanda. This is a vital regional partner organization in the transition to the next phase of its life and work with a new president, Bishop Arthur Temple, a new board and a new general secretary, Rev. Dr Fidon Mwombeki. The assembly focused on human dignity. This is connected to the needs for justice and peace, to human rights and human development, and how the churches together can make a difference in the continent of Africa, where the churches also have a hugely respected and highly

significant role. Kigali also has a museum of the genocide, and the impressions from my visit there are still with me. How race can be used as a political force to divide and to rule was well documented, as well as the potential of the cruelty of human actions, and the examples of brave people trying to survive and to start a new future of justice and peace.

In August I led a delegation visiting Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It was a joint delegation of high-level representatives from the WCC, the AACC and the Roman Catholic Church, and a follow-up to an invitation and plan developed led by Rev. Dr Sam Kobia, Rev. Frank Chikane (CCIA moderator) and Dr Agnes Abuom with the representatives from DRC during the AACC assembly. It was also a follow-up to a concern expressed in the conversations with Pope Francis as he visited us in June. The difficult situation in DRC of a delayed election has been discussed with our member churches and with the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) several times, and it has become more and more urgent. Since then, the president of the DRC has announced elections in December 2018.

The meetings took place in a very good atmosphere and really developed and deepened the relationships between the Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church in the DRC. We developed a joint statement, approved by all participants, calling for free, inclusive, fair and peaceful elections. This was described by some of the participants as a breakthrough in their relations at the national level. The role of the churches in the political work and struggle in the DRC is quite significant, and we hope and pray that they together can make a difference in the demanding process of an election. In our conversations after the visit with Archbishop Gallagher at the Secretariat of State in the Vatican, he expressed their great satisfaction with this initiative and the reports from it – which had also been shared with the pope.

Parallel to this delegation a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace team of women representatives from churches around the world visited churches and women organizations in DRC to learn about the situation of women, violence, rape and traumas from the violence in the country over many years, and discussed how to accompany them further.

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2018 has been awarded to Dr Denis Mukwege, who has tirelessly worked in the hospital to help women who have experienced severe gender-based violence – used as a weapon in the conflicts and war. This is a remarkable recognition of a unique and very significant work. I know quite a bit about him and his work through personal relations with those from Norway who have supported and contributed to his work, particularly through the Norwegian Church Aid. Another is Dr Wathne, a psychiatrist who has been working for many years with Dr Mukwege, helping the helpers of the victims (he is also the cousin of my wife, Anna). The Peace Prize focused on the situation of women in war and how rape and sexual abuse are used cynically, making women victims of the cruellest warfare. The dignity of human beings, the human right to protection, and the Christian call to promote justice and peace come together in this remarkable work. It becomes a strong call to politicians to take action to stop this barbaric violence. Dr Mukwege is himself a Pentecostal, but many ecumenical partners, particularly in the family of ACT Alliance, are working closely with him to support this work.

The visit to DRC and the other signs of ecumenical efforts in and with the joint ecumenical initiatives are important and can bring new and stronger dimensions to the work for justice and peace.

4. Ecumenical *Diakonia,* Cooperation and Consensus

The call for ecumenical contributions to burning issues of our time comes from many international partners, particularly in the UN. They acknowledge that the WCC and other church-based organizations have a huge potential and network, and a lot of credibility and responsibilities in the local communities. Our partnership with UNICEF has developed very well toward our own programme of Churches' Commitment to Children. Our churches are really involved in this collaboration. One example: I was present at the launching of the Norwegian translation of the documents of this programme recently, and I could see the high interest in this theme among those responsible for education in the Church of Norway.

Related to the Ecumenical Initiatives we are organizing, we will see in our documents for this meeting important progress in the work related to HIV and AIDS in the EHAIA programme, expanding the arenas for the work toward younger students and schools. Many international partners continue to see this as a key programme in the efforts to end this epidemic globally. Many other significant initiatives are mentioned in our reports and plans; and we see the role of the WCC as convener, facilitator, and communicator. And we see that we are respected and recognized as such.

We also see how the WCC plays significant roles in advocacy for and with our member churches, in our statements and in the work we do for justice and peace in many international arenas. The CCIA commission offers a lot of advice and support to these efforts.

The WCC has the privilege of being together in our Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace and for ecumenical *diakonia* with many of our member churches, with national ecumenical partners, other churches, and the many strong partners in the ACT Alliance. We are grateful for the initiatives to explore our cooperation and complementarity. In the light of the assembly held here in Uppsala, I would express our recognition of the work they represent in many of the countries we also have designated as priority countries for the WCC. We see their capacities and commitments, and we want to develop further the complimentary roles we have in working for common objectives. Many of them are formulated in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

I want to comment on two related issues at this point. First, it is important that ACT Alliance and the WCC have close and regular contact and cooperation on many issues, and that we define how we work together on advocacy. The ecumenical movement must have capacities to address the urgent humanitarian needs and to work for Sustainable Development. The division of tasks we have had in the past decades, will continue; we know that the WCC is not operational in the way it was in earlier times in terms of humanitarian aid and development, and not a funding partner for projects.

The most important field of cooperation and overlap is the field of advocacy. This needs to be discussed further also with the board of Act Alliance in the light of their new strategic plan. There are many important advocacy efforts nationally done by Act Alliance organizations. We cooperate in the New York office in relation to the UN. ACT alliance with its members has both close relations to many churches and many resources and experts in many fields. They represent a lot of competence. But it is also important to emphasize the mandate of the WCC on behalf of the churches, making our role unique and privileged in that sense. For some of the difficult processes toward finding consensus on important issues the WCC is better organized and equipped. We should avoid unnecessary overlap in our work, and also find the best way to use our total resources.

Second, the work that is done and will continue in reflecting on ecumenical *diakonia* has already brought significant results in developing more mutual recognition of one another's work and strengthened the church identity in the work of *diakonia* in our partner organizations. More will be done in the follow-up of the decisions in the central committee to develop further the reflections and the important theme of ecumenical *diakonia* moving toward the next central committee meeting in 2020. I am very glad that there are commitments also from the leadership of the central committee to participate in the process in this next phase.

Interest in these discussions has increased after the discussions in the central committee meeting in June this year. We have to learn several lessons from this process and how it was handled in the central committee. It is very important that there is wide participation in our reflection processes on significant themes like this, and that there is a commitment from all involved to prepare such processes and documents toward consensus. The consensus model cannot be used as a kind of veto right in the meetings of the central committee. But we have to be prepared for those situations in which issues of a substantial character might need to be discussed further before they can be brought to a common decision. We should also be aware of the complexity of bringing long documents for decisions or approvals in the central committee. Many documents can serve well as a tools for collaboration, inspiration and reflection without having gone through a consensus process in the central committee.

There were proposals in relation to this and other issues discussed to refer the issue to the Permanent Committee on Consensus and Collaboration. That committee is important for the WCC and its work in consensus, particularly to consult on how to pursue processes and how to organize ourselves. In my understanding it is not meant to be a second chamber to define the decisions on issues of our programme works that are on our agenda. They should be discussed and pursued through the normal processes in the consultative bodies and governing bodies.

For me it is important that we see our discussions on ecumenical *diakonia* and advocacy for justice and peace primarily in the light of those who desperately need our shared commitment, advocacy and contributions. I trust that we will find ways forward for that in the WCC and with our partners in mutual respect for one another and a shared commitment.

5. Concluding remarks

We are in an intensive period of work in the WCC. The anniversary and the central committee meeting have brought a lot of positive attention to our work, and we are particularly encouraged to see that many of our member churches can be involved in the work in different ways.

We are also in a time when the challenges are growing, particularly in the wider political map of the world. There are worrying developments toward more polarization and hate speech, less respect for human rights and democracy, more violence and also attacks on religious groups and churches. We have to be alert to how we can be a true sign of another vision for unity in our world, gathered for the values that unite in our journey for justice and peace. In this situation it becomes more and more meaningful to continue the reflections on the implications of being in a leading role in the ecumenical movement, which in my understanding is gaining importance. The perspective I launched in my report to the central committee in June, on being an “ecumenical movement of love,” appears to be more and more relevant and demanding. The need for that becomes more and more apparent.

May God give us the courage and wisdom to continue to be such a movement, and may God motivate and guide us in our planning and work, in anticipation of the coming unity of humankind. Thy kingdom come!

17.4 Public Issues Statements

STATEMENT ON PEOPLE ON THE MOVE: MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
*I was a stranger and you welcomed me. (*Matthew 25:35)

As noted by the joint Roman Catholic-WCC Conference on Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration (Rome, 18-20 September 2018), migration – the movement of people – is an inherent feature of the human condition. It belongs to the whole history of humanity – past, present and future – and the entire biblical narrative.

Today, an estimated 258 million people globally are migrants, i.e. living in a country other than the one of their birth. People move for many different reasons – for work, study, marriage, or to seek a better life for themselves and their families – and make valuable contributions both to their host countries and to their countries of origin. But some are forced to flee from conflict, violence and oppression. Of the total estimated 68.5 million people who are presently forcibly displaced from their homes, approximately 25.4 million are refugees, i.e. have fled across an international border – but the majority of the forcibly displaced remain within the borders of their own country, and of those that do cross an international border approximately 85% remain within their own region.

In several wealthier countries migration has become a subject of great political contention in recent years, even though the vast majority of migrants and especially refugees have been hosted in the countries and regions of the Global South. Political figures and parties in several countries of the Global North have garnered support by playing upon people's fears about the impact of migrants and refugees on their societies, economies and cultural identities.

During these very days, we are witnessing threats of deployment of military forces to prevent the entry into the United States of America of people fleeing from violence and poverty in Central America.

The response of the international community, both to the recent large population movements and to the reactions by destination countries, has been expressed in the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, and is being further articulated in two Global Compacts – one on Refugees, and one for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – to be presented to the UN General Assembly in December 2018.

Many churches in receiving countries have made great efforts to offer welcome and support to refugees and migrants, and to counter the atmosphere of fear, exclusion, racism and xenophobia that is increasingly prevalent in many of the wealthier destination countries.

The World Council of Churches has also undertaken great efforts to address this question at the international level, including most recently by convening, jointly with the Roman Catholic Church, the conference on Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration (Rome, 18-20 September 2018), closely followed by a Global Forum for Faith Action for Children on the Move (Rome, 16-19 October 2018) in which WCC partnered with World Vision International and several other leading faith-based organizations.

This meeting of the WCC executive committee takes place in Uppsala, Sweden, a country which – like Germany – has become an important destination for refugees and migrants and which has offered refuge to many people on the move despite many other European countries refusing to share equitably in the responsibility for receiving and managing the influx of new arrivals. The Church of Sweden, one of those hosting this meeting, has taken an important leadership role in the Swedish context in offering support and hospitality to migrants and refugees, and in advocating for the human rights of people on the move.

The executive committee, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2-8 November 2018:

Lifts up and affirms the example given to their societies and their governments by the many churches that seek to be true servants of Christ by welcoming the stranger, the refugees and the migrants, especially in contexts in which refugees and migrants are increasingly stigmatized, discriminated against, criminalized, marginalized and completely excluded.

Acknowledges that many people in countries receiving significant numbers of migrants and refugees are genuinely concerned and fearful of the impact on their societies, economies and religious and cultural identities, and that national governments have the legitimate responsibility to control their borders, to ensure security, and to promote stability and prosperity for their citizens.

Nevertheless ***stresses*** as a matter of first principle that all refugees and migrants, regular or irregular, are human beings each created in the image of God, children of God, sisters and brothers, with equal human dignity and rights regardless of their immigration status. To raise national boundaries and the nation state to an order of value above the recognition of the image of God in every refugee and migrant is a kind of idolatry.

Endorses the outcomes of the joint Roman Catholic-WCC Conference on Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration, and commends them to every member church and ecumenical partner.

Affirms the conference's declaration that "to refuse to receive and help those in need is contrary to the example and calling of Jesus Christ." God identifies with migrants and refugees through the life of Christ and calls us to care for people on the move in vulnerable situations, fleeing conflict, violence, persecution, famine and economic hardship.

Strongly ***reaffirms*** support for the institution of asylum, the principle of non-refoulement, and the 1951 UN Refugee Convention as essential instruments for the protection of people obliged to flee from their homes due to conflict, violence and persecution, as well as reaffirming the right of refugees to return to their places of origin once the conditions enabling them to do so in security and dignity have been established.

Calls for respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all people on the move, regardless of their status.

Recalling the WCC Churches' Commitments to Children, ***expresses*** particular concern for the situation of children on the move, and in this regard welcomes the Plan for Faith Action for Children on the Move issued by the Global Forum held in Rome on 16-19 October 2018 in which WCC cooperated with several leading international faith-based organizations.

Strongly ***reaffirms*** the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified international treaty, and the principle of acting in the best interests of the child.

Abhors the practice of separating families and detaining children, simply because they are on the move, as invariably incompatible with the best interests of the child, and condemns all such practices.

Calls upon all members of the international community to join in adopting Global Compacts on refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration that will strengthen, not weaken, the protection of people on the move. In particular, we call for action:

- For safe, regular and accessible pathways and opportunities for human mobility in compliance with international human rights law.
- To combat xenophobic and racist discourses that seek to exclude, stigmatize and criminalize migrants and refugees.
- For inclusion and integration of migrants and refugees in host countries, and against discrimination.
- For equitable responsibility-sharing for refugees.
- To end the drivers of forced displacement, and to make migration a matter of choice, not of necessity.

- Urges churches and Christians to combine consideration of the Global Compacts and of other related statements and commitments, with:
  - learning about the situation of migrants and refugees in their own localities and countries, and linking direct support and advocacy in their respective spheres of influence with active engagement and accompaniment of migrants and refugees in their midst;
  - encouraging receiving communities to move from welcome and hospitality to inclusion;
  - promoting greater social cohesion – not only inclusive of migrants and refugees, but also of other diverse minority communities and vulnerable groups – in order to create a climate of openness and spirit of solidarity more broadly in society.

Appeals for increased ecumenical and international solidarity with children, women and men on the move, and prays that they may receive a welcome and compassionate care in the countries and communities to which their journeys take them.

STATEMENT ON COP 24 AND JUST TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Climate change is altering the Earth more rapidly than previously predicted. The latest research published by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reveals that global warming is likely to cross the 1.5°C threshold already between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate.

The IPCC report indicates that a half-degree rise from 1.5°C to 2°C – the upper ceiling governments agreed to in Paris in 2015 – will likely cause an extra 10 cm rise in sea levels and heighten the risk of glacial melt and multi-metre sea-level rise, inundating small low-lying islands and coastal cities. Risks of widespread hunger, massive displacement, conflicts and species extinction will be amplified. Those people and communities living in situations of poverty, deprivation and disadvantage are already feeling and will continue to bear the brunt of climate change.

While the world is finally beginning to act to address climate change and also to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, the challenge is one of scale and speed. Current government commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions as part of the Paris Agreement are vastly insufficient to limit warming to the more ambitious target of 1.5°C. Several studies have indicated that none of the major industrialized nations are meeting their pledged emission reduction targets, and that even if they had, the sum of all member pledges would not keep global temperature rise "well below 2°C". According to UNEP estimates in late 2016, emission reduction targets would result in temperature rise of 3°C above preindustrial levels, far above the 2°C upper limit of the Paris Agreement. Since the time of those estimates, the outlook has unfortunately deteriorated, in light of the US decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

The latest IPCC report stresses that only with "rapid and far-reaching" transitions in the world economy, on a scale and at a rate without historical precedent, can the 1.5°C limit be achieved. This entails "more planning, coordination and disruptive innovation across actors and scales of governance than the spontaneous or coincidental changes observed in the past". It is estimated that the necessary economic and social transformations must take place within a rapidly disappearing window of opportunity, perhaps within as little as a decade, if we are to avoid catastrophic impacts of climate change.

In facing this existential challenge, hope lies in realising that sustainability and justice are two sides of the same coin. Carbon-neutral and climate-resilient development pathways have the potential to meet

the key goals of sustainable development, including the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities.

Signs of such hope are to be found in the actions of some governments (national and especially sub-national), businesses and investors, as well as the determined and passionate commitment of churches and civil society networks for climate justice. We lift up, among other signs of hope, the ecumenical pilgrimage from Bonn to Katowice which is currently underway, the international ecological symposium, "Toward a Greener Attica: Preserving the Planet and Protecting its People" organized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in June 2018, and the international conference on the 3rd anniversary of *Laudato Si'*: "Saving Our Common Home and the Future of Life on Earth" organized by the Vatican Dicastery on Promoting Integral Human Development in July 2018.

All these initiatives, discussions and reflections underscore the message that today the world stands in front of a great transition. If we are to build a future of wellbeing for coming generations, the profound understanding of being one humanity on one Earth created by a loving and faithful God so that "all may have life in fullness" (John 10:10), must be internalised at all levels of society, from individuals to the global community. The biblical teaching, "the Earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1), must be reaffirmed in this time of climate change.

Meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, on 2-8 November 2018, the WCC executive committee:

Stresses that there is no more time to waste in short-term self-interestedness. Urgent adaptation and mitigation measures, transformation of economic systems, deep behavioural change, and supportive national and global policies and institutional arrangements are needed *now* to avoid potentially catastrophic consequences of climate change. Amidst all these shifts, our Christian faith calls us to ensure that "the least among us" are not made to pay the price for a global ecological problem to which they contributed the least.

Commends all those engaged in the ecumenical pilgrimage from Bonn to Katowice, and *urges* the 24th Conference of Parties (COP 24) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting in Katowice, Poland, 2-15 December 2018, to deliver the Paris Rulebook based on climate justice principles and to work towards a just transition to sustainable economy *now*, entailing:

- Increasing nationally determined contributions to ensure global warming does not exceed the safer limit of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;
- Ensuring the transfer of adequate technological and financial resources to poor, vulnerable countries for mitigation, adaptation and resilience-building (amounting to USD 100 billion per year from 2020 as pledged at COP 15 in Copenhagen); and
- Delivering concrete action on loss and damage by further developing the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.

Appeals to WCC member churches and ecumenical partners urgently to intensify their advocacy and action for climate justice and transition to sustainable economy in local, national and international arenas, as well as to promote the necessary lifestyle changes including by:

- Fostering a spirituality of transformation – a spirituality of "enough" – through thoughtful theological education, the development of new liturgical resources, pilgrimages, prayers and fasting for climate justice together with ecumenical and interfaith partners and in solidarity with the victims of climate change;
- Divesting from fossil fuels and undertaking faith-consistent impact investments in renewable energies, agro-ecology, reforestation, and other activities that add to ecological health and community wellbeing; and
- Opening up spaces to discuss and contribute to the Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice, the interfaith Living the Change campaign, Interfaith Rainforest Initiative and other similar initiatives.

STATEMENT ON
ECUMENICAL WITNESS AND ACTION FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE FOR ALL:
40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALMA-ATA DECLARATION

Since its establishment the WCC has supported the work of its member churches and national ecumenical bodies, as well as government authorities, for the health and wellbeing of all people. Such support has included providing technical assistance and accompaniment to church health services and structures, promoting the establishment of ecumenical Christian health associations, and organising national health structures, as well as international health structures such as the Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) and the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy (EHAIA).

The WCC central committee meeting in August 1967 mandated the establishment of the Christian Medical Commission (CMC) to accompany and help coordinate the health and healing ministries of the WCC member churches. The main purpose of CMC was promotion and advocacy for community-based health care programmes. The principles undergirding these programmes were in turn adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF in 1975, under the rubric of Primary Health Care (PHC). In 1978, the first international conference on PHC produced the Alma-Ata Declaration, with its vision of "health for all by the year 2000", and identifying PHC as the key to the attainment of this goal. This outcome is widely recognized as a major milestone of the twentieth century in the field of public health.

The WCC executive committee, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2-8 November 2018, recognises that while much has been achieved in many areas of global health, the vision of "health for all" remains largely unachieved. Healthcare and related services have become a major industry driven by the pursuit of profit, and often excluding the poor. However, the WCC considers the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental human right, and an essential foundation for the realization of the God-given dignity of every human being.

We lift up the contribution that churches and related organizations around the globe continue to make to promote health and wellbeing, especially to marginalised and poor people in many parts of the world, often at significant cost to the churches and through great personal sacrifice by frontline health workers. We also affirm the important ecumenical role that Christian health networks play, greatly enhancing the effectiveness and impact of church-based health services that might otherwise be denominationally fragmented and disconnected.

We acknowledge with appreciation the address by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), to the WCC central committee meeting in June 2018, and his affirmation that "the time is right for a new memorandum of understanding to mobilize faith-based organizations (FBOs) for universal health coverage."

The WCC executive committee:

Encourages all WCC member churches to recommit themselves to Christian service in the field of primary health care, for effective national health structures, and to the realization of the vision of health for all.

Requests the general secretary to pursue closer cooperation and partnership with the World Health Organization in the realization of this vision, to mobilize faith-based organizations for universal health coverage.

Further ***requests*** the general secretary to ensure that promotion of primary health care for all is emphasized in the implementation of the WCC's new Global Ecumenical Health Strategy.

Urges WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to engage in advocacy and action for the right for all to have access to medicines at an affordable price (including traditional medicines and treatments which have been proven to be efficacious), and for international health research - including

the development of medicines and treatments – to be re-focused on illnesses and afflictions that particularly affect the marginalized and poor people of the world.

Invites engagement by WCC member churches and ecumenical partners in proactive church-based health promotion activities, including the promotion of active and healthy lifestyles, support for cessation of unhealthy lifestyles, and the development and dissemination of biblical reflections on health and healing.

STATEMENT ON RECONCILIATION AND RESTORATION OF RELATIONSHIPS IN ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA

The executive committee of the World Council of Churches warmly welcomes the recent positive developments in the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea, beginning a process of healing of the wounds still lingering from the Eritrean-Ethiopian war of 1998-2000 in which an estimated 80,000 people lost their lives. We express our respect and appreciation to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia and President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea for their leadership in bringing a formal end to this conflict through the joint agreement signed at the Eritrea-Ethiopia Summit on 9 July 2018, followed by an official peace agreement concluded in Jeddah on 16 September 2018. We celebrate with the peoples of both countries the resumption of diplomatic and economic relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the opening of Eritrean ports to Ethiopian vessels, the agreement to jointly develop ports on Eritrea's Red Sea coast, the reopening of the border on 11 September 2018 and the resumption of the movement of people between the two countries after 20 years of closure.

In this season of reconciliation and restoration in the region, positive developments within the churches of both countries also give powerful new hope of the healing of old wounds. The end of a 27-year long schism in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, with the reunification of the "Addis Ababa Synod" and "Synod in Exile" is an inspiration to the entire Christian family. And the re-establishment of functional relations with the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, following a WCC delegation visit to Eritrea in September 2017 – the first such visit in 10 years – has created fresh opportunities for engagement in the Eritrean context.

The WCC executive committee, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2-8 November 2018:

Welcomes, affirms and encourages these steps towards restoration of relationships within and with the churches, and between the governments and peoples of both countries.

Requests the WCC general secretary to explore ways in which the WCC can further support deeper reconciliation among the people and churches of Ethiopia and Eritrea, and to promote a sustainable and resilient peace in the region.

Invites all WCC member churches, specialized ministries and ecumenical partners to consider ways in which they can accompany and support the churches and people of Ethiopia and Eritrea in the ongoing pilgrimage of justice and peace in their countries and region.

STATEMENT ON SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, AND THE 2018 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3: 28)

In March 1992 the World Council of Churches wrote to the Secretary-General of the United Nations: "In various international fora, women are urging the United Nations to recognize that violence against women constitutes the violation of the basic human rights of half the world's population. As Christians we support these initiatives, guided by the firm conviction that all human beings are made in the image of God and deserve protection and care." Reading the signs of our times, there has been an increase in sexual and gender-based violence against women, children and vulnerable people. The purpose of the current statement is a call from the WCC for new commitments and contributions to stop, prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

This call for addressing sexual and gender-based violence is rooted in the outcomes of a recent consultation marking the 20th anniversary of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), which took place in Kingston, Jamaica, 1-6 October 2018. It is also inspired by the award of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize to Dr Denis Mukwege and Ms Nadia Murad, whose work embodies the very issues that were emphasised at the consultation, and addressed during the Ecumenical Decade itself.

Hearing the painful testimonies and inspirational stories of women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, we are encouraged and challenged to affirm the dignity, rights and needs of all women, children and others who are vulnerable – or are made vulnerable – to such violence.

We recognize that sexual and gender-based violence is evident in many different and often hidden contexts, including spousal abuse and 'child marriage', and that its risks and impacts are compounded by stigma, racial discrimination, socioeconomic divisions, poverty, abuse, armed conflict, and lack of access to quality reproductive healthcare. Issues related to human sexual behaviour and gender relations within the family are taboo in many churches and church communities, preventing the church from being a safe and protective place for women who are victims of or threatened by sexual and gender-based violence. The church must actively contribute to the elimination of such violence and abuse.

Goal 5.3 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for the eradication of 'child marriage' and female genital mutilation by 2030. It is estimated that 20 million girls and women still do not have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education and services. It is imperative that the church, in partnership with civil society, governmental and intergovernmental partners, take the necessary steps to break the culture of silence and address the issues which are impacting women and girls, families and communities around the world.

The 2018 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad is an encouragement to all those working to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Denis Mukwege is a physician who has helped thousands of victims of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and has condemned the use of sexual violence against women as a strategy and weapon of war. Nadia Murad is a survivor of war crimes who was abducted, repeatedly raped and abused by so-called 'Islamic State' (IS) fighters who attacked her Yazidi community in northern Iraq in 2014 with genocidal intent. Since escaping, she has spoken out about her experience and became the UN's first Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking in 2016.

We note that both the DRC and Iraq are priority countries on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. We recall the 2009 public statement by the WCC condemning violence against women in the DRC, and we acknowledge the work being done by the WCC to promote social cohesion in Iraq and to promote and protect the rights of religious minority communities in that country.

Through the Churches' Commitments to Children we are all called to provide safe and open space for children's participation in the life of our churches as well as in society, and to be more effective advocates and actors for the elimination of violence against children.

The Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women raised similar stories of sexual and gender-based violence from 30 years ago. The present reality seems even more brutal, with so many girl children in refugee camps 'married' as 'protection' from sexual violence; rape and sexual violence continuing to be used as a weapon of war; so many lives lost or blighted due to discrimination based on gender, race, poverty or human sexuality; and political and social institutions – including the church – continuing to demonstrate misogyny, impunity and discrimination despite the hard-fought struggles of so many for equity and liberation;

The executive committee of the WCC, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2-8 November 2018, therefore:

Urges WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to condemn or reiterate their condemnation of sexual and gender-based violence and of any form of violence against women, children and vulnerable people; to declare such violence a sin; and to make constructive efforts to overcome the attitudes that predispose to such violence, including by the development of clear sexual harassment policies that clearly spell out consequences for such harassment.

Encourages WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to continue working with local organizations and groups in opposition to all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and offering support including trauma healing for women, girls, and others vulnerable to such violence in their communities.

Encourages the creation of new and more effective ways for communication and collaboration among WCC member churches, and local advocacy groups on gender justice issues, including by taking up and promoting the Thursdays in Black Campaign.

Appeals to WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to develop urgent *action* networks to stop assaults, abuse, and the killing of women, girls (including female foeticide), and other vulnerable people in their context, and to clearly identify and denounce 'child marriage' as the rape and abuse of girl children.

Encourages WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to support boys' and men's organizations in becoming spaces for transformation and affirmation of positive and anti-violent masculinities.

Calls upon WCC member churches and ecumenical partners to promote the audit of institutional budgets through a gender justice lens at all levels of operation.

Encourages WCC member churches and ecumenical partners and their theological institutions and networks to promote research on gender justice to influence religious, ecumenical, inter-religious and cross-cultural curricula development.

STATEMENT ON THE URGENT CHALLENGE OF ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION: 10 YEARS AFTER THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

The executive committee of the World Council of Churches meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, on 2-8 November 2018, observes that this year marks the 10th anniversary of the global financial crisis, the continuing consequences of which include escalating levels of income inequality, even greater concentration of wealth in the hands of an even smaller group of economic elites, increased economic precariousness for a larger majority of the world's population, widespread youth unemployment, growing sovereign indebtedness, social and political instability, and the rise of populist political forces in many contexts around the world.

We observe that hardly any key actors in the practices that generated the crisis were ultimately held accountable for the global harm done, that the political opportunity in the immediate aftermath of the crisis for making systemic reforms of economic policy and practice was largely missed, and that the few regulatory measures put in place after the crisis have been rolled back. The unconstrained greed of an unaccountable few continues to create risks threatening the future of many, and the conditions for another global financial and economic crisis of even greater dimensions are rapidly emerging again.

Moreover, we note that today many governments are again falling into debt crisis and are struggling to finance the sustainable development goals due in part to corruption, corporate tax evasion, tax competition, and the erosion of tax bases.

We further note that the urgent challenge of climate change demands a global financial and economic system that applies new economic indicators (other than the growth-centric gross domestic product) accounting for social and ecological impacts, that prioritises investments in ecological sustainability, and that reduces debt dependency so as to free up resources for social and ecological renewal. This challenge has recently been dramatically underlined by a special report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels which indicates that avoiding catastrophic impacts of climate change will require transforming the world economy at a speed and scale that has no historic precedent.

The WCC executive committee therefore:

Renews its oft-repeated call for a new international financial and economic architecture for an economy of life that links finance to the real economy, accounts for social and ecological impacts, and sets effective constraints on greed.

Calls for effective regulation and real accountability for those individuals and entities – including transnational corporations and financial institutions regarded as "too big to fail" – whose greed and corrupt practices have created, and continue to create, risks of widespread and disastrous economic crisis and instability, and deprive nations of the resources needed for equitable and sustainable development.

Encourages the efforts of the WCC, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), the Council for World Mission (CWM), and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA), and of all churches and ecumenical and interfaith partners in this regard.

Affirms the work of the Ecumenical Panel on a NIFEA and the Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics and Management for an Economy of Life to build economic literacy and competence within churches by equipping participants with the tools and language to effectively advocate for urgent transformations in the global financial and economic realm.

Asks the WCC to collaborate with ecumenical and other partners in convening broader consultations for financial and economic transformation – engaging different categories of expertise represented within the churches – including in the areas of (1) taxation as a tool for promoting redistribution, accountability and sustainability; (2) regulating and democratising finance; and (3) post-growth economics.

MINUTE ON THE IMPACTS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTING IN FRENCH POLYNESIA (MAÒHI NUI), AND DECOLONIZATION

The World Council of Churches has long supported the advocacy and engagement of the Maòhi Protestant Church for justice and compensation for the lingering health and environmental consequences of the French nuclear weapon testing programme conducted in their region. This engagement is an inspiration for and expression of the shared ecumenical commitment to the global elimination of nuclear weapons, now reflected in the form of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, for the signature and ratification of which the WCC actively advocates.

The injustice perpetrated on the people of Maòhi Nui through exposure to fallout and other contamination from 193 nuclear weapon tests conducted over 30 years until 1996 has much to do with the system and attitudes of colonial dominion. The WCC central committee had explicitly supported the 2013 re-inscription of French Polynesia on the UN decolonization list, considering the removal of this territory from that list in 1947 to have perpetuated a continuing injustice.

The WCC executive committee, meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, 2-8 November 2018, lifts up and affirms the Maòhi Protestant Church's longstanding commitment and persistent witness for justice, including recent advocacy initiatives taken in the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly, and with relevant UN human rights accountability mechanisms.

We request the general secretary to continue to provide support and accompaniment to the Maòhi Protestant Church in its ministry of caring for those suffering the health consequences of nuclear testing, and in its witness for justice and peace, and to further strengthen WCC's efforts for the elimination of nuclear weapons globally in light of nuclear rearmament by several nations and the increasing threat of nuclear conflict. In particular, we ask the general secretary to explore possibilities for organizing a Pilgrim Team Visit to Pacific island nations and territories affected by nuclear weapon testing programmes, including French Polynesia (Maòhi Nui).